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A CASE HISTORY OF JAPAN

A CASE HISTORY OF JAPAN

BY

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TO
SHIGEO

NOTE

The method of naming people differs in Japan from that of the West. There the family name comes first and the personal name second. This method has been retained throughout this book. Thus Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Tokugawa Ieyasu, where the first name in each case is that of the family. When an individual is referred to alone the personal name only is generally used.

FOREWORD

MANY ARE the books about Japan that have appeared during the past two or three years. In this regard the period 1944-6 is comparable with that of 1904-6, when there was a similar influx of Japanalia on to the book market. But what a difference in tone is evident ! Then we were all full of the Russo-Japanese War. What a wonderful race were these little Japs ! What heroism they showed—what devotion ! How splendid was their system of Bushido, so like the old European chivalry ; truly at that time they could do no wrong ! They were looked at—their selves and their history, their age-long culture and their art—through the softest of rose-tinted glasses.

What a change has taken place in forty years !

All that was then bright is now murky ; the fine, brave colours of praise and appreciation have become dulled and distorted into shades and tints that show the object in various hues of ugliness and depravity. "There is none that doeth good—no, not one !"

But nevertheless there remains something common to both groups of publications—a spate of opinion based on extremely superficial knowledge. How refreshing it is to read such a work as that of John Embree,¹ who spent a whole year in one tiny Japanese hamlet in order to study the inner realities of Japanese village life ; or, to take another type of volume, Sir George Sansom's *Short Cultural History of Japan*, the result of long years of deep and painstaking research, presented with all the marks of true scholarship and erudition. With such works I frankly do not hope to compete.

The object of this short volume is to try to present the Japanese people as a whole in as fair a light as possible, neither concealing their defects nor stressing their finer qualities. The book is divided into two parts ; the first part describes the main influences that have been brought to bear upon the people during their long past, and the effect of these various impacts on the Japanese social organization. Part II deals with the psychological effect of that social organization on

¹ *A Japanese Village : Suze Mura.*

individuals, as shown in peculiarities of custom and behaviour. Finally, in regard to the problem of Japan's future, a long-term solution is suggested, based on the conclusions drawn from the data presented.

Looking back on my fourteen years among the Japanese, I now realize how many were the opportunities I had of obtaining a real insight into their character; I also realize—and with what regret—how frequently I let those opportunities pass me by. If, in spite of that, anything I have written helps others to visualize the Japanese from a new angle and so to understand something more of their mentality than before, I shall have accomplished what I had hoped to do.

A list of the various authorities which have been consulted is appended. The source of all quotations has been given in the text. Most gratefully do I acknowledge the debt I owe to the different authors. One source of information, however, which helped me greatly, is not there mentioned. This was a mimeographed copy of a pamphlet which, when it was first lent to me, was in a sorry condition. It was torn and the title page was missing. Subsequently I was informed that it was the work of the well-known anthropologist, Dr. Ruth Benedict. It was of the greatest value to me, not for the actual information it contained, most of which was already known to me, but because that information was so admirably co-ordinated and systematized. To the learned author, therefore, I make very special acknowledgment, coupled with the hope that the full result of her researches may be shortly given to the public in a new work from her pen.¹

I must also record my great gratitude to Mr. Stanton Whitfield for the generous way in which he placed his Japanese library at my disposal. Without his willing help I should have been almost hopelessly handicapped.

Finally, my deepest thanks and gratitude are due to my old friend, Miss A. M. Lees, who, in the midst of a most busy life, has found the time to type the whole of the manuscript, and that not merely once, but owing to the necessity of much revision and rewriting, twice over. I have also had the benefit of her criticism and advice, which have been of very real value.

¹ Since writing this there has appeared her admirable work *The Sword and the Chrysanthemum*.

INTRODUCTION

A PROBLEM IN RECONSTRUCTION

LET US suppose that a potter is presented with a certain oddly-shaped vessel, broken and cracked in several places but retaining certain elements, whether of shape or design, of undeniable beauty and charm. He is asked to repair and reshape it according to a new pattern, but to be specially careful not in any way to change or damage those beautiful elements which must be retained in the final result. Surely an almost impossible task ! He would first have to learn all he could as to the origin of the broken specimen, particularly the nature of the clay used in its manufacture, the technique of its moulding and decoration, and also the purpose for which it was designed. To fulfil the condition and to succeed in turning out the vessel in the shape desired would certainly be a work of almost insuperable difficulty.

This is something akin to what the Allies are pledged to do in Japan, but with this difference—that in the place of the plastic and passive substance of the clay there is the unpredictable reaction of the human element to an unwanted operation ; not to mention the quite unforeseeable behaviour of that odd phenomenon, the Japanese Spirit or *Yamato damashi*.

The Japanese claim that they are a peculiar people, different in kind from all other nations, and of course far superior. They base this claim on their divine origin—both the country and its inhabitants being the offspring of the gods—while their ruler is the last of an unbroken line of divine Emperors who trace their lineage direct from the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu-o-mi-Kami.

Now their claim to be unique among the nations of the world is, to a great extent, true, though not in the way nor for the reasons that they affirm. For not only do they share the difference between the Oriental and Occidental common to all Far Eastern peoples,

but they also show characteristics quite distinct from those of their neighbours. For example, there is an immaturity, an odd childishness often to be noted in the Japanese, when compared with the mellow dignity of the Chinese outlook. But contrast the Japanese power of organization, of selecting a goal and driving straight at it, of quick incisive thinking, with the Chinese vagueness, love of argument and *laissez faire*, and we realize how vastly different the Japanese are from their continental "cousins". This is only one example among many of the strange and striking diversity of type in the Japanese race, seen in relation to the surrounding nations of the Far East.

It is evident, therefore, that a knowledge of, or acquaintance with the Chinese, the Malaysians or Siamese, the Javanese or Koreans need not be of the slightest help in grasping the intricacies of the Japanese character and psychology. On the contrary, it may even be a hindrance, for it will constantly be found that a course of conduct or method of approach, the reaction to which could be counted on in China or Siam, will meet with a result wholly unexpected in Japan.

Yet to all who are interested in the future of the world in general, and the Far East in particular, the reconstruction and eventual rehabilitation of Japan is a problem as vital as it is complex. For those who are engaged, even in the most humble capacity, in helping towards its solution, some knowledge and understanding of the people is a primary necessity. It is in the hope of contributing in a small way to that knowledge that this book is being written.

The only way by which the character of a people can be gauged is by studying their racial origin and their slow development from primitive conditions, until they form themselves into a definite social unit; one should know the forces which from time to time have impinged upon them as a whole, producing a civilization which, in the case of Japan, is surely as strange and peculiar a phenomenon as is to be found anywhere in the world.

It is of course obvious that where there is any emotional or intellectual bias, be it pro or con, there can be no fair judgment. It is just this fact that makes a true knowledge of Japan so difficult to

obtain. For Japan, as also her people, leaves no one indifferent. She is either hated or loved, admired or despised. Lafcadio Hearn, whose observation of the life of the people is surely unequalled, unfortunately observed them through the rosier of rosy spectacles. Accurate in his facts, he is often gravely suspect in his interpretation of them. Other authors, with obviously intimate knowledge of the Japanese, have erred in the opposite direction.

In examining the various elements that have contributed to the development of Japanese psychology and the formation of character, it will be necessary to deal at some length with the history of the national beliefs, as also of those social phenomena derived from and developed by religion. In regard to the political history of Japan, only those factors will be considered which are found to have a direct bearing on the life of the people in general.

One of the charges constantly brought against the Japanese by the Westerner is that of imitation. They are accused of being too intellectually lethargic to originate anything, and of merely copying from the more advanced nations. This idea must be given up if any fair estimate of Japanese character and potentialities is to be gained. It is true that in their emergence from primitive conditions they learned much from China. But far from this being a symptom of mental inertia, it is an early sign of that characteristic national trait—"a desire to better themselves, a tireless ambition and a determination to profit by the knowledge and experience of others" (Sansom).

It should be noted that both with regard to China in the early years, and to the West in the last century, this adoption of foreign ideas by Japan was not made under compulsion; on the contrary, it was entirely voluntary. The Japanese in both cases realized their limitations and their lack of experience, and set themselves to learn from the most efficient tutors at their disposal. Far from being a sign of lethargy, this recognition of their own shortcomings, with the determination to learn from masters qualified to teach, is evidence of a very striking humility, and as such is highly creditable.

This desire of the Japanese for self-improvement, for making themselves as good as, or better than even the best, is seen in their

capacity for adaptation. Japan first adopted, then adapted, and the second part of the process was far the more important. The rapidity with which, even in those very early days, the Japanese genius stamped its character on Chinese forms is quite astonishing. There is no possibility of confusion. The model is taken, and with that as a basis, adaptation to Japanese feelings and character follows in an extraordinarily short period. Speaking of those early years Sir G. Sansom writes: "The administration system, in the beginning almost slavishly imitated from Chinese models, developed into something which, though retaining its original structure, was in practice refashioned to suit Japanese ways of thinking and behaving. The great corpus of Chinese philosophy, respectfully followed as to its texts, was so transmuted by changes of emphasis or by reinterpretation that it conformed to Japanese sentiments."

The same process was to be followed in the nineteenth century, when Japan, emerging from her seclusion, began to transform herself into a modern State. Emissaries were sent abroad to all the leading powers to examine and report on the different methods of government and administration. England supplied the model for the Constitution and the Navy, while the French plan was adopted in the case of Education and the Army. The latter was subsequently organized on the German or Prussian system while certain elements in Education were later incorporated from the U.S.A. But in each case the same method of adaptation could be observed. The various organizations formed on Western models have retained such superficial similarity to their originals as to deceive foreigners into thinking that they are meeting with something with which they are quite familiar. But in actual fact the resemblance is only on the surface. The machinery, the inner realities, are peculiarly and entirely Japanese. Foreigners not unnaturally assume that a familiar exterior is the expression of a mentality and character equally well known. Nothing could be further from the truth, and hence arise misunderstandings and misjudgments.

Just as, in the case of a historian, the justice of his conclusion will depend on his ability to see through the eyes of his particular period, so, too, in forming our estimate of the Japanese it is a great help to

try and see what the Japanese think of us, our manners, customs and institutions both private and public. Only thus can a true knowledge be gained of the differences that separate us, of their quality, quantity and magnitude. The distance between the banks once ascertained, bridges can be built. But for the foundations to be secure, the quality of soil on *both* banks must be thoroughly well understood.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	vii
INTRODUCTION: A PROBLEM IN RECONSTRUCTION	ix

PART I

I. THE RACIAL IMPACT	1
II. THE RELIGIOUS IMPACT: SHINTO IN THE HOME	10
III. THE RELIGIOUS IMPACT: SHINTO IN THE COMMUNITY	25
IV. THE RELIGIOUS IMPACT: SHINTO IN THE STATE	35
V. THE CULTURAL IMPACT: BUDDHISM	47
VI. THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT UP TO 1600	57
VII. THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT. THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE	68
VIII. THE CHRISTIAN IMPACT AND ISOLATION	79
IX. THE SECOND SHINTO IMPACT AND THE RESTORATION	91
X. THE EDUCATIONAL IMPACT	101

PART II

FOREWORD	115
XI. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH. ISOLATION AND IMITATION	117
XII. SPLIT PERSONALITIES? ATROCITY PHENOMENA EXAMINED	128
XIII. OBJECTIVES, OBLIGATIONS AND OBSESSIONS	140

	PAGE
XIV. AMBIGUITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS	157
XV. "LIFE IS EARNEST"	172
XVI. EASING THE STRAIN	181
XVII. RECONSTRUCTION: THE PROBLEM OUTLINED	194
XVIII. JAPAN AND THE IDEAL	208
BIBLIOGRAPHY	221
INDEX	223

PART I

I

THE RACIAL IMPACT

THE RACIAL origins of the Japanese people are wrapped in obscurity. They have been the subject of much research, extending over many years, to which the professors, both native and foreign, of archaeology, geology, anthropology, geography and history have all contributed.

Among these *savants* there are still considerable differences of opinion, but the theory here put forward is perhaps the most generally accepted.

The people of Japan are of mixed—of very mixed—origin; but it is impossible to state with any exactitude either the time or the source of the different early migrations which have contributed to the evolution of the Japanese race. It can only be generally affirmed that the country has drawn her peoples and much of her culture from the north and central coastal regions of the Asiatic mainland, as well as from the southern regions of the Pacific.

The aboriginal inhabitants of Japan, known to-day as the Ainu, seem to have come into the country from an early Caucasoid stock of north and east Asia, perhaps so long ago as when Japan formed part of the Asiatic continent. From philological and archaeological evidence it is clear that these Ainu were spread all over the islands of the Japanese archipelago.

The first of the new arrivals came from south-east Asia and the Pacific islands. They were of a Malayan strain with elements of Negrito stock. This immigration is of outstanding importance, owing to the tremendous influence it was subsequently to have on the social and psychological development of the Japanese.

Of course this immigration must not be thought of as a single historical incident. It probably extended over many years, companies of immigrants arriving from time to time, establishing themselves and reinforcing the earlier arrivals.

This great movement of people from the south appears to have split into two main streams; one of these went straight to Kyushu, the southernmost island of Japan proper, the other to the Korean peninsula. With the passing of the centuries, each of these migrations was profoundly influenced by the peoples among which it had settled; but in strikingly different ways. Those who had established themselves in the Japanese islands found themselves among a community which was of a simple, unwarlike type living by agriculture. The newcomers found little difficulty in asserting their physical superiority, and regarded themselves as subduers and conquerors. As the invaders strengthened and enlarged their hold upon this new territory, the aboriginal tribes fled before them. Though there was a certain amount of intermarriage between the two peoples, most of the aboriginals who did not succeed in escaping from the invading hordes were kept as slaves. Thus the newcomers became more and more dominant, and gradually acquired a character of strong aristocratic tendency, of superiority and arrogance.

In the meantime, those who had settled in Korea had met with a very different set of circumstances; for there they found themselves in the midst of a culture far superior to their own—that of China. Inferior in numbers, though of a sufficiently aggressive character to establish themselves in security, they were strongly impressed by the continental civilization and customs which, as the centuries passed, had on them the reverse effect to that which the Ainu environment had had on their racial brethren in southern Japan. For, as has been said, in southern Japan the fierce, excitable Malaysian traits had been emphasized and increased. On the mainland they became more and more weakened and subdued. The native inhabitants of the Korean peninsula were also of a considerably higher type than the Ainu of the islands, with the result that intermarriage was frequent. The effect of this was the subjection

of the Malaysian strain to the Mongolian, until only a small trace of the former remained.

Then occurred an interesting event; for the Korean peninsula itself became the source of another large migration into Japan, a migration which landed on the coast of Idzumo province, just opposite Korea. Thus the two main branches of the original migration from the South were, after centuries of separation, united once again, but with their original racial character so much modified that they had become almost two different peoples.

The effect of this migration on their new country was immense, for it was through this that China's cultural influence permeated Japan—an influence that was subsequently to have so tremendous an effect on the people.

In the early records the two migrations are referred to by separate names; that which came direct to Japan from the South was called the *Kumaso* group, that from Korea the *Idzumo*. By the time of the latter's arrival the Kumaso group had already made deep advances into the country, driving the Ainu aborigines before them, though their subjugation had not been a walk-over. There had been a long succession of internal struggles, not only between the aborigines and the invaders, but also between rival groups of the latter, recalling the struggles which took place in Britain after the invasion of the Germanic tribes. Slowly the indigenous population was driven northwards. The Kumaso, at times disintegrating among themselves, at times amalgamating, gradually formed themselves into distinguishable groups and clans until definite small "kingdoms" began to emerge, the most powerful of which established itself in the province of Yamato. By this time the Idzumo state had itself come into being and was contacted by the Yamato clan. By what means the two came to terms, whether by conquest or diplomatic methods, is not known; but the result was the amalgamation of the two streams, the Kumaso and the Idzumo. It was this amalgamation that was eventually to form the Japanese race as we know it to-day.

Now, in respect of culture, the Idzumo were far superior to the Kumaso, a fact which the latter recognized and envied. But on the other hand, the latter knew themselves to be greatly superior to the

Idzumo in all matters relating to war and practical administration. It was probably this appraisal made by each, of its own and the other's strength and weakness, that led to the final amalgamation. As was to be expected, the combination of the two groups, each supplying what was lacking in the other, proved irresistible. Together they pushed their conquest northwards until the whole of the main island of Honshu, as far north as Sendai, was completely occupied.

The records of Japan being so meagre in regard to the pre-historic period, it is almost impossible to assign dates, or accurately to assess the passage of time during which the events outlined above took place. But it was certainly a matter of centuries between the arrival of the first wave of the Kumaso group and the amalgamation referred to above.

"It is probable that at least for a thousand years after the foundation of the Empire there persisted not only an incessant struggle with the aboriginal inhabitants of the islands, but also between rival chiefs and upstart war-lords, tending slowly to further fusion of clans as the weaker were absorbed in the stronger."¹

But by the time of the amalgamation, it is certain that the clan that had established itself in the province of Yamato, henceforward to be known as the Yamato Clan—was *facile princeps*, and wielded an authority which was recognized throughout the Kumaso as a whole.

It is now generally agreed that the "heavenly sovereign" of those early ages was simply the head of the clan which had proved itself to be the most powerful. As its chief he would have authority and influence over many of the others; but his authority did not, at first, extend over all. As, however, the clan increased by expansion and absorption, by means aggressive or diplomatic, so did his authority increase, until he was recognized as head of all. Thus arose the Imperial House of Japan, a more detailed account of which will subsequently be given.

Now if the theory of the early invasion given above is correct, it might be expected that some evidence would remain in the appearance and physical development of the people of to-day. As a fact

¹ J. Ingram Bryan, *The Civilization of Japan*.

there are in Japan two very marked types, which are so different as to make it difficult at first to believe that both are of the same race. The Kumaso or aristocratic type is of medium height, slim and well proportioned. The face is long and oval, the nose narrow and slightly aquiline, the angles of the eye sockets almost horizontal. It is this type that is constantly portrayed in Japanese prints as representative of the noble or the Samurai. In temperament it is extremely sensitive and tremendously reserved, of exquisite politeness and courtesy. There is a not unnatural tendency among Japanese writers to put forward this aristocratic model as typical of all Japanese. Unfortunately it is in a very marked minority compared with the Idzumo or "pudding-faced" type—the "Hodge" of Japan. Short, stocky, and bandy-legged, he averages a little over five feet in height. He is bullet-headed, with high and prominent cheek bones; the nose is flat with wide nostrils and sunken bridge; the eye sockets are markedly oblique, while the lips are thick with large protruding teeth. For his size he is exceedingly strong. Mentally he is slow-witted, but extremely dogged, stubborn and conceited. Emotionally unbalanced, he is of quick and violent temper, but controlled by centuries-old traditional restrictions, which will be described in a later chapter.

The large majority of the peasants are of this type, and it is not altogether surprising that, in certain literary works emanating from the upper classes, these same peasants are often referred to as "beasts", "clods" or by some such derogatory term!

In the case of other races, one of the means by which origins are traced is language, but this is of no help in dealing with the Japanese, for in spite of an immense amount of research work, nothing is known for certain as to the source of the Japanese tongue. It seems to have almost no affinity with any other known language. But a curious incident which occurred some fifteen years ago is worth recording in this connection. A certain Catholic missionary from France landed at Yokohama. As he stood on the quay listening to the talk among the Japanese officials and coolies, the sounds seemed oddly familiar. He suddenly realized that they were uncommonly similar to those of his native province; it appeared that

some words were nearly identical; and he himself was a Basque! It is significant that in one year he was able to speak Japanese with perfect ease; and admitted that he had found no difficulty whatever in acquiring it. Considering that Japanese is recognized as perhaps the most difficult language in the world, this was very remarkable!

Dr. J. Ingram Bryan sums up the question of the Japanese language thus: "If the Yamato who invaded and colonized Japan were of purely Asiatic origin, it is remarkable that their language shows no affinity with any Asiatic tongue. In vocabulary the Japanese vernacular has some words in common with the Bantu language; but the Asiatic element in it is clearly a later accretion. . . . There was doubtless a migration of Turano-African stock across Asia or along the coast, and some of the most learned anthropologists have suggested Africa as not only the birthplace of the human race, but also of civilization itself." There the question must be left.

In regard to the social conditions of the people during these early centuries, all that is known goes to show that in general the state of their civilization was definitely primitive. In the eighth century the reigning Emperor ordered the first compilation of national records. These are in two works, the *Nihongi* and the *Kojiki*. One of the reasons for the compilation was the Emperor's desire to establish once and for all his claim to be in the line of direct descent from the Divine Ancestress, *Amaterasu-o-mi-Kami*, the Sun-goddess, which goes to show that there were rivals to his position. These two works are the nation's oldest records, and they are an astonishing compilation. They are a collection of stories in which myth and legend play a very large part, stories which show a childishness, a *natveté* and an indecency quite incredible. There is evidence, too, of a callow conceit and egoism, defects which are still so integral a part of the Japanese character. Yet at the same time the records show a very real sense of the beauty and love of nature, though marked with a somewhat adolescent sentimentality; and this again remains a characteristic of the modern Japanese. From these records it is not easy to distinguish fact from legend, but they do reveal an advanced state of agriculture, which indicates that society was becoming

settled, and a form of civilization definitely in being and progressing. They also reveal a consciousness of the absolute superiority of those who constituted the upper class, as completely distinct from the *vulgus*, and this consciousness, vague enough at the beginning, was gradually to become crystallized and play a vital part in the subsequent history of Japan.

The deification of the Emperor is clearly implied in these early records, and it is most probable that this idea was brought into the country by the Kumaso invaders. For in the Kojiki the ancestor of the Yamato ruler is represented as having descended from Heaven and alighted at Osumi.

Now Osumi is the extreme southern point of the island of Kyushu, the very spot where invaders from the south would naturally land ! We further know from research in ancient folklore and legend that the tradition of divine kingship was widespread throughout the region of south-east Asia and the chain of islands spreading therefrom into the Pacific. It is clear, too, that so striking a claim as one of divine ancestry would not be made by the Yamato king unless it was known to be the normal claim of sovereignty, and regarded as such by the people in general. It is evident, therefore, that in Japan divinity is an appanage of the Imperial office: the particular occupant is divine because he is the Emperor; he is not Emperor because he is divine.

This distinction shows the fallacy of those who in these latter days have been urging the abolition of the Emperor as a means of doing away with the central idea of State Shinto. It would do nothing of the kind. There would always be an heir somewhere on whom the cloak of divinity would rest, even if he lived hidden in a cave !

It is possible then to have some idea of this early Japanese society as it slowly became more settled. There is the picture of a supreme ruler surrounded by his attendant chieftains and officials. Members of the Imperial family are known as the *Kobetsu* while those immediately below them are the *Shimbetsu*.

"The Kobetsu were rulers and their sons and daughters princes and princesses of the blood; the Shimbetsu were territorial chiefs who later ruled as Court nobles and feudal lords" (J. Ingram Bryan).

The government organization of these early days was naturally somewhat loose, but it is clear that the Ruler was the one and only source of all authority. He and his "court" were warriors all, for fighting was still the main occupation. That they were a quarrelsome, sensitively jealous people is clear, for even when there was a time of truce with the aborigines, there would still be feuds and struggles for power among themselves. Later, members of the Shimbetsu were to hold different administrative and military posts, and gradually these particular functions became hereditary. But here at the very beginning there is found that oligarchical rule which has been the bane of Japan throughout her long history.

In regard to the common people, the records tell us little else than might be expected of any primitive society. Morality was obviously lax and murder common; it is, however, interesting to note that the latter was a crime only when it was committed by one of a lower station against his superior! We also learn that suicide was the usual procedure after defeat in battle, but the reason was most probably nothing more than the determination to escape a far more unpleasant fate, for the torturing of prisoners was one of the Ainu recreations. It cannot be said with certainty whether this is the origin of *hara-kiri* and of the idea of death rather than capture in war, but it is very possible. It is also significant that among primitive peoples the region of the solar plexus was often considered to be the habitat of the soul and hence *hara-kiri* would be the obvious means of opening the door for its escape in the most direct manner.

The first human Japanese ruler, the Emperor Jimmu, is said to have established the Empire in Yamato in the year 660 B.C. It was probably much later. Now the first records, the Kojiki and the Nihongi, were not compiled until the eighth century A.D., the actual date being 712 for the former and 720 for the latter. The real history of Japan can be traced with some certainty only from this century, which leaves a period of thirteen hundred years during which the race was developing and becoming established. Fortunately much earnest research has brought to light the more significant happenings of those dim centuries, among which happenings the contacts between Japan and the mainland should specially be noted. Not that

China had at that time a great influence on the internal structure of Yamato society; that was to come at a much later date. But rather it shows the beginnings of what has always been characteristic of Japan, the great welcome accorded to distinguished foreigners.

In the second century before Christ Korea was conquered by China, with the result that several of the more important leaders fled to Japan for refuge. Just as in the earlier century the Kumaso had recognized and appreciated the culture brought over from China by the Idzumo, so now a similar welcome was extended to these new-comers. The latter, encouraged by their reception, sent for their families, became naturalized, and settled down. Eventually they became so numerous as to form a separate class, to which the name *Bambetsu* was given. They were also permitted to elect a clan chieftain like the other native clans. "It is probable that such foreigners were first welcomed as experts in politics, government, war, art and industry" (J. Ingram Bryan). But their real importance lies in the fact that it was through them that the Japanese got their first insight into the domestic culture of China and Korea—a foretaste of the wealth of art and craft which was later to have such a tremendous influence on Japan's civilization.

II

THE RELIGIOUS IMPACT: SHINTO IN THE HOME

THOUGH the Japanese are racially of very mixed origin, and possessing a social system in which the gulf between the upper classes and the masses has been practically unbridgeable, yet they must surely be the most homogeneous nation in the world. What is the force that holds them together? It is that of their "religious" beliefs, and it is in this sphere of religion that we must look for the real formative influence on character. "The real religion of Japan, the religion still professed in one form or other by the entire nation, is that cult which has been the foundation of all civilized society—Ancestor Worship."¹

The forms which Ancestor Worship has developed in Japan are three in number, but they are all classed under the name of *Shinto*, or the Way of the Gods. It was not, however, until the sixth century that it was so designated, probably to distinguish it from *Butsudo*, the Way of Buddha, "though its being called a 'way' may be due to the influence of Taoism, the Chinese religion of the 'Way'."²

Shinto was originally a simple animistic cult, and some form of animism was undoubtedly part of the religious equipment of the Kumaso invaders. This animism was greatly intensified by being the universal belief of the Ainu aborigines.

Japan is a country which, from its scenery, its climate, its liability to sudden disastrous convulsions of nature—in short its general atmosphere—would be likely to impress the simple minds of uncultured savages with a sense of mystery and awe. It is a country of sudden contrasts, of the unexpected. It is easy to imagine the feelings of those untutored tribes, settled down in some spot of exquisite beauty. They have erected their primitive dwellings and raised their

¹ Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan, An Interpretation*.

² Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion*.

crops—and in a moment all is wiped out by earthquake or typhoon. What more natural than that they should ascribe such disasters to evil spirits who must at all costs be propitiated?

To these unseen “spirits of power” the name *kami* was attached. In Occidental books this word is almost invariably, though incorrectly, translated as “gods”. Its meaning is by no means so definite. Dr. Anesaki writes: “The spirit is called *kami* which means ‘superior’ or ‘sacred’ or ‘miraculous’. Any object or being which evolved a thrill of emotion, whether affectionate or awe-inspiring, appealing to the sense of mystery, might be regarded as a *kami* and accorded due respect. Some of the *kami* were thought to reside in the heavens, others to sojourn in the air or in the forests, to abide in the rocks and in the fountains or to manifest themselves in animals and human beings.”

Now what is so astonishing is that this belief in the *kami* persists in Japan to the present day. Among the peasantry it is almost as widespread as it was in those early days of the race, though among the more cultured the name is reserved for the spirits of the departed. “Shinto is fundamentally not so much a religious system as a complex of ancient beliefs and observances *which have remained comparatively unchanged* through the vicissitudes of history, despite the impacts of foreign systems like Buddhism and Confucianism.”¹

To account for this stability, it will be necessary shortly to trace the development of Ancestor Worship proper, from the early vague animistic beliefs of that primitive society. As the Ainu aborigines were subdued and driven from their land, the invaders took over the country, forming themselves into settlements, each group probably occupying that area which it had itself seized or helped to subdue. These settlements would be along the river and lakesides, and in the valleys where agriculture was carried on. Separated from each other by mountains and other natural boundaries, each settlement would soon form a self-contained community. In what was essentially a savage, fighting people, the head of each such group would naturally be the finest warrior, the most trusted leader, his

¹ Dr. Anesaki (*italics inserted*).

"councillors" being chosen according to their aptitude for war and skill in the use of weapons.

As the nation as a whole became more organized, these groups were given the name of *Uji*, which meant birth or blood-relationship. It is also translated as "family", but it was in reality a collection of families or households owing allegiance to one head, and our word "clan" gives what is probably the most accurate meaning.

It was natural and inevitable that as soon as the sense of group consciousness developed, the need should be felt for a protective spirit—a *kami*. Often the nature *kami* of the locality was taken in the first instance. But more frequently the original chieftain of the *uji* was regarded on his death as the *kami* of the *uji*—or the *Uji-gami*—a contraction of the Japanese, *Uji-no-kami*. It was believed that he continued to protect the clan, and that he watched over its welfare from the world of spirits, a world which was in close contact with that of the living. Thus arose the conception that the *Ujigami* was always the founder of the clan, which accounts for many of the clans "deriving their descent from what was originally some nature god such as the spirit of water or of wind, of forest or of lake" (Dr. Anesaki).

Here then is seen in process how the religious thought of the people gradually passed from the cruder ideas of animism, the worship of the spirits of nature, to the beginning of Ancestor Worship proper. Though Dr. Anesaki tells us that "the original religion of the Japanese was an unorganized worship of deities and spirits", there was at first no distinction between the two. All such entities of the other world were classed under the name of *kami*, though there were grades of seniority among them. But the first definite idea of Ancestor Worship came with the institution of the *Uji-no-kami*. "At the dawn of history this religion known as Shinto was beginning to develop more or less articulate expression of hero and ancestor worship with a background of nature worship."

It has been said above that in Japan to-day there are three forms of Ancestor Worship. "These are the Domestic Cult or the worship of the family ancestors, the Communal Cult or the worship of the clan ancestors, and the State Cult or the worship of the Imperial

Ancestors.”¹ Each of these will be dealt with in some detail, but at the moment it is important to show the growth of the communal consciousness which has had so great an effect on Japanese character and psychology.

Compelled as we are to use the word “family”, there is a danger of misunderstanding. In the early days there was nothing of what we understand by that name. Marriage such as we know it did not exist. Men took women just as they pleased. A man could have children by his sister or other blood relations. The family was at first just a group of people which, for purposes of self-preservation, came together into a larger group, which gradually became more definite and settled until it developed into the *uji*.

As soon as this stage in social development was reached, progress was quicker. The primary *uji*, as it increased and a sense of morality grew, would tend to break up into smaller units, themselves, as in the original *uji*, bound together by a common ancestor. But these smaller *uji*, which may at this stage be called “households”, were all under the control of the Chief of the larger *uji*, and were united in a common worship of the *Ujigami*. But if the great *Ujigami* was to be worshipped, why not the departed spirits of the smaller households? Thus each household came to have its own *Kami*, its original progenitor. The next stage would be the recognition of all the household’s departed spirits as *kami* (in Japanese there is no plural form), and so gradually there came into being the Domestic Cult, the Shinto of the Home.

“This was probably the last development in Shinto, for it postulates a comparatively settled society.”¹

Now, just as the progenitor of each original *uji* or clan became the *Ujigami*, to whom every member of the clan owed reverence and worship, so the progenitor of the Imperial Clan, the Sun-goddess, became the national deity, and the spirits of the departed Emperors, the national gods. Subsequently the number of the latter was increased by including all those of Imperial blood, as also those of great families who claimed descent from divinities other than the Sun-goddess.

So the Shinto edifice was completed. Its different stages really

¹ Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan, An Interpretation*.

correspond to the development of the sense of Community. That the Communal Cult was the starting point seems certain, but whether the Domestic developed before the State Cult, or vice versa, is not of great importance. What, for the purposes of this study, is important, is that we find, even before the dawn of Japanese history, a nation whose people are conscious of being surrounded by a host of powerful spirits. It is said that there are thirty million *kami* recognized in Shinto ! Before we can estimate the effect of this host of the unseen on the psychology of the race, it is necessary to know what was actually believed as to the qualities, characteristics and powers of the *Kami*.

“In all forms of primitive religious belief there is a line of development which changes as the spiritual experiences of the race become more varied and more subtle.” Though in the very earliest period the *kami* of nature played the largest part in the life of the people, it is the *kami* of the dead which is of the greatest importance, and it is only the beliefs as to these that are here described. Hearn affirms that early Ancestor Worship was little more than a religion of ghosts, which arose from speculation about the dead. Mankind being in far too primitive a state to form any such abstract idea as that of a supreme Deity, there was no possibility of imagining a judgment of conduct in this life; nor, in consequence, was there any conception of a place of reward or punishment hereafter. The ghost of the dead man dwelt in his tomb, from which it could emerge at will to help or annoy his former friends or enemies. So in early Shinto, the Japanese thought of their dead as still inhabiting this world. Later there developed the idea of a shadowy sort of underworld, and also of a region where dwelt the original great gods and goddesses. But whereas the gods and goddesses are in a “place” apart, the dead are in constant easy communication with the world. They could, therefore, in some way and to some extent share in the activities of those on earth, could take part in their joys and sorrows. This participation of the dead in earthly life led to the belief that they also required physical nourishment, the offering of which afforded them sustenance and gave them pleasure; in return for such attention they would confer

benefits; conversely, if they were neglected they could show their displeasure by bringing misfortune on their earthly relatives—though this idea seems to have been a later growth.

The great Shinto scholar Hirata wrote: "All the dead become gods," which makes it clear that no moral superiority was attached to the title of *kami*.

In *La Cité Antique*, M. de Coulanges, writing of the early classical world, says: "This kind of apotheosis was not the privilege of the great alone; no distinction was made. It was not even necessary to have been a virtuous man; the wicked man became a god as well as the good man—only that in this after existence he retained the evil inclinations of his former life." This is precisely what was believed in early Shinto. This had the obvious result, for as Motoori has written: "Since there are bad as well as good gods it is necessary to propitiate them with offerings of agreeable food . . . and whatever is likely to put them in a good humour!"

This propitiation was rendered especially necessary by another belief, which was that after death the spirit became possessed of superhuman powers, with the intensification of its earthly qualities. Thus one who on earth delighted in cruelty and unkindness to his friends and neighbours might become a veritable monster of wickedness, were he not to be "kept in a good humour"!

Yet there always persisted the idea that the possession of such superhuman powers could not in itself procure happiness for the dead. That depended wholly on the attention of the living. The requirements of each spirit are few and simple, but they must be met. Each spirit must have its proper shelter, its tomb, of which it can only take possession if the funeral rites are duly carried out; it must also have offerings of food, fire and drink so that it does not suffer from hunger, cold or thirst. With regard to these offerings, it was not thought that the dead actually consumed them. "As they, the spirits, were the invisible essence of their physical bodies, so the offerings themselves had each its invisible essence which provided the *Kami* with the necessary sustenance and warmth."

These three beliefs, then, were fundamental to early Shinto, and

they still survive with little modification among the great majority of the Japanese. Hearn sums them up as follows :

1. The dead are still in the world of the living. They dwell in their tomb as in a house and come forth from it to take part in the activities of their relations and friends.
2. All the dead become *kami*—"superior ones". They acquire supernatural powers, but their character is in no way changed. The good are still good, the bad remain evil.
3. The happiness of the dead depends entirely on the service given to them by the living ; and conversely the happiness and welfare of the living depends on their rendering that service with due reverence and respect.

Arising partly from these three basic beliefs, partly from the old animistic consciousness, there developed two other beliefs, though their adoption probably came later.

4. The dead are responsible for everything that happens in the world. Fair seasons and rich harvests, typhoon and earthquake, pestilence and famine—all this was the work of the dead.

And finally what is the most significant of all :

5. All activities of the living, whether they be good or evil, are in fact controlled by the dead.

It requires little effort of the imagination to realize the effect of such beliefs as these. They were no mere nominal or theoretical "acceptances", but were tremendously believed in. In the literal meaning of the words they are fear-full, awe-full beliefs, especially in a country subject to sudden and violent cataclysms of nature. It is true that on the two last-named beliefs, the impact of Buddhism had the greatest effect, and may indeed be said to have dispelled them from the religious convictions of the race. But the first three

beliefs still remain embedded in the life and consciousness of the nation. They "are yet a fundamental part of the existing cult. Though Japanese Ancestor Worship has undergone many modifications in the past two thousand years, these modifications have not transformed its essential character in relation to conduct; and the whole framework of society rests upon it, as on a moral foundation" (Lafcadio Hearn).

In this connection no apology is needed for quoting once again that very significant observation of Dr. Anesaki: "Shinto is . . . a complex of ancient beliefs and observances *which have remained comparatively unchanged* through the vicissitudes of history, despite the impacts of foreign systems like Buddhism and Confucianism," and, it may be added, Christianity.

Beliefs, such as those outlined above, could never be forgotten, or accepted as a matter of comparative unimportance. They were far too close to the life of the people; for their well-being, individually and collectively, depended on the practical implementation of what they believed. This is borne out by the fact that the earliest word used for "government" is *Matsuri-goto*, meaning "religious observances" and "matters of worship". A significant distinction as to the use of this word is pointed out by Sir G. Sansom in his *Short Cultural History*. This expression, he writes, "is never used of government by the sovereign, but of the work of his ministers, thus showing that their participation in acts of worship . . . was regarded as their chief function, and perhaps also that their work of administration was a form of worship".

It has been shown how the three cults that distinguish Japanese Ancestor Worship originated and developed. These must now be described in more detail, for it is in the actual working of this faith in the daily lives of the people that its influence on their character will be seen. It is naturally the Home Cult that affects them most intimately, and its simplicity and sincerity give an initial picture which will be of the greatest help when dealing with the Communal and State Cults.

One of the essential features of Shinto as a whole is ritual purity. The avoidance of pollution was a matter of the utmost importance.

This idea certainly developed from the primitive conception of death as corruption, and the horror that arose from it. Subsequently the causes of uncleanness became multiplied and may be said to include all things which may cause disgust or revulsion to the senses. Offences which elsewhere would transgress the ideas of morality were not, with one or two exceptions, regarded as causing pollution. Sir George Sansom points out that in the ceremony of the Great Purification Ritual handed down from the earliest days, offences are regarded as of two kinds, heavenly and earthly.¹ Among the latter only incest and bestiality come into the category of morals. The remaining causes of offence are wounding and killing; desecration of corpses; leprosy and tumours. Personal physical uncleanness was always regarded as a pollution and hence the daily bath that every Japanese, even the poorest, will take if he possibly can. Of course, in most cases the original reason is unknown or forgotten. The custom, however, remains as a national habit, and is among the pleasantest of Japanese characteristics.

Though, with the development of Shinto, the number of offences which caused pollution increased, the original cause of these offences was death. In the earliest rites, the corpse was left in the hut of the bereaved relatives, who moved elsewhere and erected another. That this was the custom among all, high and low, is seen from the fact that for many centuries the Emperor himself changed his "capital" after the death of his predecessor; and it was only after the advent of Buddhism, with its teaching on the soul, that the first permanent capital was set up in Kyoto.

As time passed, society became more stabilized, dwellings were better built with a view to durability, and the abandonment of such dwellings to the corpse became economically impracticable. A special death or mourning house, *moya*, was built, to which the body was taken and in which the funeral rites were performed. This in its turn became the Shinto Shrine for the community, and it is of interest to note that this shrine still retains the form of the primitive hut.

It was due to the influence of Confucianism that the ceremonies connected with the dead became finally established in the house,

¹ *A Short Cultural History.*

while it was left for Buddhism to transform the thoughts about the dead to something more tender, more gentle, than had ever been known before. But all this was a matter of centuries, of slow and imperceptible growth.

The Home Cult of Shinto may indeed be thought of as the religion of all Japanese. To describe it in all its details and ramifications would be out of place, for all that is necessary is to give such a general picture as will enable us to gauge its influence on the lives and character of the people. In every Japanese home, be the religion of the occupant Shinto or Buddhist, will be found a small shrine; if of the former faith it is called *mitamaya*, if of the latter *butsudan*. In this shrine are placed the tablets of the dead. In Shinto households they are very simple; thin, flat sticks of white wood, inscribed with the names of the departed. They are called *mitama-shiro*, which may be translated "spirit-substitute". The Buddhist tablets, *ihai*—a word which carries the idea of soul commemoration—are more ornamental, being lacquered and gilded. In both cases, however, the tablet is made in the form of a miniature tombstone. "By the shapes of these tombstones one can tell immediately, when visiting a cemetery, which graves commemorate those of the Shinto faith, and which are Buddhist" (L. Hearn).

Among the country folk and the less sophisticated of the city dwellers, the household shrine is the centre of Japanese home life. Before it certain ceremonies must be daily carried out. Prayers are said and offerings laid before the tablets. The women usually perform these simple rites though in the case of some important family gathering they must always be done by the head of the household. There is nothing formal or complicated in the rites—no set prayers or specially prescribed gestures. Brevity and simplicity are their characteristics. The prayers—short invocations for help in difficulty and trouble, simple thanksgiving for benefits received, are extempore. The offerings are taken from the ordinary food of the household. The whole ceremony will take hardly more than a couple of minutes. Yet, simple and short as it may appear, it may never be omitted; it is the foundation on which all Japanese home life rests.

Lafcadio Hearn has described this domestic religion of the dead in a passage of great beauty which must be quoted at length; it shows the possibility of the cult at its best, and though perhaps somewhat idealized, it portrays the feelings of many a Japanese to-day:

"The belief that the dead need affection, that to neglect them is a cruelty, that their happiness depends upon duty, is a belief that has almost cast out the primitive fear of their displeasure. They are not thought of as dead; they are believed to remain among those who loved them. Unseen, they guard the home and watch over the welfare of its inmates; they hover nightly in the glow of the shrine lamp and the stirring of its flame is the motion of them. . . . From their shrine they observe and hear what happens in the house and they share the family joys and sorrows; they delight in the voices and the warmth of the light about them. . . . They were the givers of life, the givers of wealth, the masters and teachers of the present; they represent the past of the race and all its sacrifices; whatever the living possess is from them. Yet how little do they require in return! Scarcely more than to be thanked as the founders and guardians of the home in simple words like these: 'For aid received, by day and by night, accept August Ones, our reverential gratitude.'"

This passage represents the softer and gentler side of the Home Cult, and when we read it, it seems to us natural that the performance of the daily rites should be in the hands of the women of the house. But there is another side also, sterner and more compelling, and it is this which has had a profound effect on the formation of Japanese character. For the departed, being present as though still living, can observe all that happens in the house. Moreover, not only do they hear every whispered word, but they can read thoughts. They represent the ever-present, all-seeing eye whose scrutiny no member can escape. The ancestral shrine, too, contains within itself not merely the spirits of those whose names are written on the visible tablets—some five or six perhaps—but those of all the family progenitors stretching back into the dim and unknown past, whose names are inscribed on the sacred scrolls which are likewise kept

within the *mitamaya* or *butsudan*. The shrine represents, therefore, the whole long record of the past, "the voice of tradition, the experience of the race".

The effect on the character of those who hold this faith—and it may be said to have been almost general throughout Japan—must be tremendous. It is not, of course, suggested that it is held by all with equal intensity, but even in the case of those who adhere to it in a mere spirit of formalism, it must leave its impress on their whole way of thought and conduct.

For consider the burden that each must carry. To offend the *kami* brings retribution, not merely on the offender but on the whole family to which he belongs. True, the fault may be committed unwittingly, yet the danger will be incurred none the less. Wilfully to neglect the ancestral host, or to behave or think of them with callous indifference, is a proof of an evil disposition; deliberately to commit some crime is to bring upon them shame and contumely. One who acts thus can fall no lower, for he has sinned against the dead.

There is an Arab proverb which says: "Each man bears his fate around his neck." Equally might it be said of the Japanese: "Each man bears the burden of the past, of all tradition, in his heart." It is not here affirmed that such ideas and thoughts are always present to the Japanese mentality and consciousness. But they are for ever "in the air"—accepted as the normal accompaniment of life.

It is said that the Japanese are the most conservative people in the world; it would be a marvel were they anything else!

To live in an atmosphere where even an unconscious act may bring down misfortune on those near and dear to one would be impossible were there not some rule for conduct, through observing which the individual might feel secure. As the conception of the *kami*, their powers and their functions, developed, so did such a rule come into existence. Vague enough though this rule was at first, it was the influence of Confucianism that crystallized it into a definite code known as the law of Filial Piety. Originally it only prescribed the conduct of children to parents, but it gradually expanded to take in all relationships that might arise within the family group.

Lafcadio Hearn suggests that the word "piety" should be understood rather in its classic meaning, as the *pietas* of the early Romans, i.e. the sense of household duty. *Pietas*, he goes on to say, implies "reverence for the dead as well as the sentiment of duty to the living; the affection of children to parents and the affection of parents to children; the mutual duties of husband and wife; the duties likewise of sons-in-law and daughters-in-law to the family as a body; the duties of servant to master, and of master to dependant—all these are included in the term".

But in Japan it is the cult of the ancestors which is the very foundation stone of the edifice of filial piety. On it are based all other rules of conduct.

From this extension of the idea to the minutiae of conduct in daily life arose two conceptions which have profoundly affected Japanese character. It must be remembered that this law of Filial Piety is no written code, it is rather an atmosphere of compulsion. From this Motoori draws the following conclusions:

- (a) That human beings are created good and therefore "it is unnecessary to trouble their minds with systems of morality; if a system of morals were necessary men would be inferior to animals";
- (b) That the Japanese, having no such cut-and-dried system, are superior to all others. "It is because the Japanese were truly moral in their practice that they required no theory of morality, and the fuss made by the Chinese about theoretical morals is owing to their laxity in practice."

Thus we see the conception of moral superiority to other nations embedded in the heart of the Japanese home!

The second conception arising from the Ancestral Cult in the home is the power and sanctity of authority. Obedience to the authority of the past as represented by the ancestral shrine; obedience to the authority of the present as represented by the family hierarchy: therein is found the whole fulfilment of that all-embracing doctrine—Filial Piety.

The advantage offered by any written law or code is that it is definite. As soon as the law is defined, there is no doubt in the mind as to what will constitute its infraction. But with so vague a concept as that of Filial Piety, the only hope of security is implicit and unquestioning obedience to what tradition has laid down. Thus the Japanese finds himself hedged round with every kind of restriction and injunction, and it is only by complying with these that he can feel safe. He is relieved from the trouble of thinking for himself. The family and its anxieties, these are what constitute the all-important centre of his life. He himself is only of value in so far as he fits in with that group. As an individual he counts for nothing.

It is important to remember that in Japan the word "family" has a much wider connotation than that accepted in the West, where it is usually limited to the idea of a household consisting of parents and children. In Japan it includes all those of blood relationship connected through the male line. Thus in the case of an early and prolific marriage it will comprise the great-grandparents, grandparents and their offspring, the sons and daughters of many generations with perhaps, in addition, those who have been adopted; for in Japan adoption into a family is a frequent occurrence.

The chief reason for this custom is to ensure the continuity of the ancestral rites, though there are many other grounds on which such a step is taken. The one adopted is regarded as a member of the family in the fullest sense, and should he become the head of the family will receive the same obedience as though he were of true blood relationship.

In the old days the authority of the head of the family was absolute, extending even to the power of life and death. Though his position has become greatly modified, yet until 1945 implicit obedience was expected—and given—by all to the head, and by the younger to the elder of the same sex; also by the female to the male.¹ In any family crisis or event of importance a decision would be made in council, but always in accordance with the requirements of the

¹ Though, under the new Constitution, the power of this graded authority—particularly that of the male over the female—will be weakened, yet the habit of thought engendered over centuries will certainly persist for years to come.

Ancestral Cult. Thus, in the case of a son's marriage, the council would decide all matters connected with it. Celibacy, though not legally forbidden, was definitely condemned by custom, while for the eldest son marriage was practically obligatory. The reason is of course obvious—the securing of a male heir through whom the carrying on of the Rites might be assured. For the same reason barrenness might be the cause of divorce, and if so extreme a measure was not taken, a concubine might be brought into the family.

Thus in the intimate circle of the home, the Japanese from his earliest years learns his first duty, that of sinking his own personality for the sake of his little group; the habit of group thinking and group acting; of utter obedience to authority, and, above all, the ultimate reference of all activities to the *kami*, upon whose favour everything pertaining to his welfare must finally depend.

How cramping such a system must be to the development of the individual character is easy to understand. But it is equally evident that it must also—and does—develop a remarkable capacity for self-abnegation, for self-sacrifice and sympathy. Were the practice of such qualities to be extended beyond the limit of the family circle it would provide an example for all the world! Were such virtues the result of the individual will, of constant self-imposed discipline and restraint, their attainment would be an achievement indeed. Most unfortunately, as has been shown, they are the result of authority imposed from without. These qualities are like hot-house flowers, whose luxuriant growth has been forced within the enervating atmosphere of a family conservatory, in which the Ancestral Cult may be said to form the artificial heat. Exposed to the air of the world around, they wither and too often die away. Yet what potentialities are there!

III

THE RELIGIOUS IMPACT: SHINTO IN THE COMMUNITY

IT IS USUAL in describing a nation's progress from primitive to modern times, to speak of its development; in the case of the Japanese it is not easy to understand how they could develop, in the strict meaning of the word, when subject to such a restrictive system as the Home Cult is seen to be. Yet this is by no means the whole story of the inhibitions to which the ordinary Japanese is subjected at every moment of his life. How rigidly he is bound, how completely he has come to depend on external authority, can only be realized when the full implications of Shinto as it affects the community begin to be grasped.

It has been shown how this Communal Cult originated, and how there gradually developed from it the religion of the Home Cult. But this development in no way lessened the authority of the clan god—the *Ujigami*—whose worship continued side by side with that of the family ancestors. It was indeed the centre of the clan's life, the force which held the separate households together as a unit. "The communal cult was the pivot upon which the traditions and life of the people moved" (Anesaki).

The *Ujigami*, it will be remembered, was originally either the local god or the progenitor of the *uji*, and in some cases the two conceptions were confused in the communal mind. There are found traditions of the *Ujigami* combining in himself attributes of a purely human kind together with those of a nature deity.

Anthropological research confirms the fact that implicit obedience to the unwritten law of custom and usage is everywhere characteristic of primitive communal religion. Japan is no exception to the rule. "Scrupulous fidelity to tradition," writes Dr. Anesaki, "is everywhere a characteristic of tribal religion. The individual is almost nothing in the face of the community, and unreasoning submission

to social sanction is the essential condition of individual life. Authority and tradition, not the person and conscience, are the ultimate foundation of morality."

This remains essentially true to-day in Japanese village life, though in certain respects the impact of modern ideas has produced some modification. But in general the Japanese peasant remains bound by the soul of the past, which still forms the foundation on which his whole system of morality is based.

To speak of a system of morality where Shinto is concerned is perhaps somewhat misleading to the occidental mind, for there is little in its content which could be described either as a "system" or as "moral". The Japanese Shinto apologist, however, regards this lack as evidence of the innate Japanese "goodness", which did not need direction in right conduct! However, so far as there is such a system, it is the quality of submission that is insisted on.

As in the early days the shrine of the *Ujigami* was the centre of clan or tribal life, so is it now the centre of every Japanese village and urban district. With the passing of the centuries the shrine itself has taken on the name of its supposed spirit occupant and is now called the *Ujigami*. The *Ujigami* of to-day, therefore, has become what can best be described as the "parish church", and is the centre of the religious life of its parishioners. To the Japanese, however, it is the centre in reality; it is not so in a mere nominal sense as is unfortunately the case with so many parish churches of the West.

The parishioners of the *Ujigami* are called *ujiko*, or children of the communal *kami*, and it is their duty to maintain the shrine in every respect. Each *Ujigami* has its special feast days known as *matsuri*, the most important of which is the "patronal feast", the day kept specially in honour of the communal "god".

On this day his portable shrine is brought out into the streets. It is a very magnificent affair of great weight, covered in gold and most intricately carved. It is borne on the shoulders of from twenty to forty men who, so long as they are actual bearers, are supposed to be filled with the spirit of the god. On this day the *kami* is thought

to visit his people. The bearers reel from side to side of the road—the *kami* is inspecting the habitations. It is the day, too, on which, should he be displeased with any of them, he administers punishment, though so drastic a vengeance as that described by Lafcadio Hearn is probably confined to the villages alone. He is describing how the god shows his displeasure: "If the shrine strike against any house—even against an awning only—that is a sign that the god is not pleased with the dwellers in that house. If the shrine breaks part of the house, that is a serious warning. But it may happen that the god wills to enter a house—breaking his way. Then woe to the inmates, unless they flee at once through the back door; and the wild procession thundering in will wreck and rend and smash and splinter everything on the premises before the god consents to proceed upon his way." Hearn then mentions two such wreckings which he witnessed, the reasons for which he enquired. He then says: "Both aggressions were morally justifiable. In one case a fraud had been practised; in the other help had been refused to the family of a drowned resident."

For foreigners generally in Japan, this "patronal" procession is the one Shinto manifestation with which they are familiar. I, personally, have seen an awning in front of a shop knocked down, though at the time I was not aware of the significance of the action.

Such festivals are great days for all the local inhabitants, the parishioners, the *ujiko*. Everything possible is done to make it as enjoyable as may be. Each household subscribes what it can to the expenses which provide music, dancing, jugglers, food and drink within the grounds of the *Ujigami*. There is also, in most "parishes" a special children's day on which a miniature shrine is carried on the shoulders of six- or seven-year-old tots. These, too, sway from side to side in imitation of their elders, as the god inspects the dwellings where his little ones reside.

The general enthusiasm shown on the special festivals is indicative of the close relationship that exists between the shrine and the people. Actually it is an integral part of their life. Some days after birth every baby boy and girl is taken to be presented to the god and placed under his protection. As the children grow up they go with

their parents to pay visits on certain days. The courtyard of the shrine forms the communal playground for all the children. Before any important event, a visit is paid to the shrine. The student about to start his school or college life will ask for the *kami's* help in his studies; the young husband will bring his bride to seek a blessing on the family to be. The last visit paid by the new conscript, or the soldier about to join his regiment for active service, will be to the *Ujigami*, to which he will go immediately on his return to offer thanks for his preservation.

The office of priest to the shrine is naturally one that bestows considerable influence, particularly in the country, where the communal spirit is more intense than in the towns; for the priest represents in his person the will of the people, their united religious sentiment. In general the office is hereditary, and the holder often claims to trace his ancestry back to the clan progenitor whose spirit he now serves. His power, therefore, is very great, and can at times be irresistible.

It is of interest to note that in Shinto a priestly hierarchy has never existed, and the probable reason for this is that in "the Way of the Gods" there has been little or no distinction between the affairs of this world and those of the unseen. It has already been remarked that the early Japanese name for government was *matsuri goto*—"matters of religion". When political concerns are divorced from things spiritual, each requires a separate organization and the graded hierarchy of the one is likely to be repeated in the other. But where religion and government are the same, as it was in early Shinto, and to a large extent remains to-day, no distinctive religious hierarchy is necessary.

Thus even to-day the religious and social life of the Japanese peasantry are so closely linked as almost to be identical. The welfare of the community is still thought to depend on the goodwill of the *Ujigami*—the god of the community; in times of drought, of epidemics, and of destruction caused by typhoon or earthquake, it is to the *Ujigami* that the people direct their petitions for help. He is essentially the guardian god. "And the cult of the *Ujigami* embodies the moral experience of the community—represents all its cherished

traditions and customs, its unwritten laws of conduct, its sentiment of duty" (Lafcadio Hearn).

It is therefore obvious that, just as in the Home Cult an offence against family tradition and custom is regarded as an offence against the family ancestors, so any act or behaviour contrary to the traditions of the community will be an offence against the *Ujigami* and as such may bring trouble and disaster on the whole district. Even actions in themselves harmless but savouring of the unusual, the eccentric, would be regarded as wanting in respect to the *Ujigami* and therefore subject to condemnation—for "Customs are identified with morals. . . . The existence of the community is endangered by the crime of one of its members; every member is therefore held accountable by the community for his conduct. . . . Independent, exceptional conduct is a public offence" (Hearn). These words were written some forty years ago, but, with little modification, they hold good to-day, particularly in the more remote villages. The rapid industrialization of Japan has drawn many from the land into the great factories of the towns, and undoubtedly this has resulted in a certain amount of sophistication. But as a whole the atmosphere of communal authority sanctioned by tradition is little changed, though the effect of defeat in the war will assuredly tend to weaken its influence.

Reference has been made above to the statement by Dr. Anesaki in reference to the Communal Cult: "The individual is almost nothing in the face of the community and unreasoning submission to social sanction is the essential condition of individual life." He further writes in what might be regarded as somewhat of an understatement: "The lack of individual initiative and the tyranny of the community over the individual have often produced evils."

This tyranny must now be examined in greater detail. In the first place the communal law reinforces that of the household. It insists on the strict observance of the latter, and thus strengthens its authority and makes it yet more weighty and burdensome. As soon as the period of early childhood is passed, the boys and girls of the community will be watched by all lest they become slack in the observance of filial piety. Any act markedly contrary to that duty

would be rebuked by all. When old enough to go to work or to study, the growing lad is also old enough to endure the criticisms of the community. Such a retort as "mind your own business" is totally impossible in Japan; for the absurd situation exists that no one can have a "*his own business*"—or if he has such a thing, it must also be the business of others! As, with advancing years, the boy or girl begins to be more conscious of the pressure of the household law, so does he or she become at the same time more conscious of the weight of public opinion.

When the young people are of an age to marry, the family council is called together, a "go-between" is selected, and the matter is put in train. The one who has least to say in the matter is, in general, the young man himself. If he shows any symptoms of unwillingness to carry out the behests of the council, the weight of the communal will is brought to bear. Open rebellion in so important a matter would not be countenanced for a moment; it would set far too dangerous a precedent. It might be thought that after marriage the young man would be able to manage his own house as he wished. Not a bit of it! The moment he has started a household he and those belonging to him become more influential in the community, and his responsibility to the common welfare is correspondingly greater. He is there to serve it, and the only way he can do so is by regulating all his actions in accordance with the common will. The higher he rises in the social scale the more tightly are the fetters of custom and tradition bound upon him.

It is true that modern conditions have to some extent loosened the more intolerable of the restrictions which formerly—but not so long ago—were so ruthlessly applied. But in the more remote country villages they still function as of old. It can indeed be said that even in these modern days an ordinary Japanese of the people can hardly ever do exactly as he pleases; that the survival of communal sentiment and old-fashioned custom still exerts a numbing weight on the free development of personality and character.

It is important to remember that in Japan privacy, as understood in the West, is unknown. The idea that "each man's house is his castle" would be incomprehensible to a Japanese. Throughout

the day the doors of the village houses stand open; to close them would be regarded as a gross impertinence, an insult to the whole community. It is only the "great official" who is permitted the privilege of inaccessibility ! Thus everyone lives in public, his every action open to the praise or blame of his neighbours and the community in general. This idea still functions to a great extent even in the towns and cities, where it is quite unusual to find a front door bolted from within during the day.

But supposing some individual, either wilfully or by mistake—it makes no difference—offends the communal conscience, what occurs ? In a moment he will find himself isolated, alone, most effectively ostracized. There is nothing violent or unseemly about this; it just happens; and the silence, the soft hostility of this isolation, is the most dreadful part of its character. It might well be compared with the shower of soft ash that went on falling, falling on the thriving little town of Pompeii. This is the punishment usually meted out for anything that "is not done", be the offence one of commission or omission.

Violence is not usually indulged in—it is seldom that an individual will act in such a way as to incur so severe a retribution. But should it happen, then the infliction of punishment is left to the day when the Patronal Feast of the *Ujigami* is celebrated. What happens then has already been described; it is the god who punishes direct !

In former days, however, there was one punishment even heavier than that of ostracism, and which must have been terrible indeed—that of banishment. In feudal times—and they lasted until 1867, though latterly conditions were somewhat less rigorous—every man's place of residence was prescribed by law. Without very special permission given by law, change of domicile was absolutely forbidden. Further to ensure the stability of the people, the law strictly forbade any village or community to receive a stranger. Only one exception was permitted, that of the *ronin* or "masterless samurai".

Anyone therefore banished from his community, thrown out by the communal will from his house, his clan, his occupation, was

faced with utter misery. No other community would receive him. He was a stranger to all, without a shelter, without a friend.

"A banished man was houseless and friendless. He might be a skilled craftsman, but the right to exercise his craft depended upon the consent of the guild representing the craft in the place to which he might go; and banished men were not received by the guilds. . . . His religious connections could not serve him in the least; the code of communal life was decided not by Buddhist but by Shinto ethics. Since the gods of his birthplace had cast him out, and the gods of any other locality had nothing to do with his original cult, there was no religious help for him" (Lafcadio Hearn).

In those days the family was the legal unit of society. Cast out from the family, the individual became legally non-existent. He became a *hinin* or a "not-man", condemned to live by begging or by joining some band of highway robbers or wandering mountebanks.

For in Shinto then—and, alas, even now—no place was found for the idea of human brotherhood, for the conception of any claim upon kindness, except within the limits of the family, and to a lesser extent of the community. Blood and communal relationship, these alone entitled one to sympathy. *The stranger was everywhere the enemy.*

While it is true that in modern times the punishment of banishment has practically passed away, that of ostracism still remains and was occasionally applied in all educational establishments from middle school (fourteen–eighteen) upwards. In such cases it was the class that formed the community, and the offending student might endure weeks, nay months, of a perfectly polite and utterly frigid silence. This would continue until he made a public apology before the class. But a terrible result might follow, for the effect of such ostracism might quite possibly extend beyond the school grounds. By incurring it, it would be argued, the boy must have committed an offence against his family ancestors as well as against his *Ujigami*. Such a lapse in correct conduct has actually been known to affect the whole of a student's after career; he has suffered a disgrace which can never be wholly wiped out.

It is not difficult to imagine the result of this pitiless suppression of all individual instinct and endeavour in the character of the Japanese. In the not so old days when the communal cult was observed with meticulous care by all the people, its effect on the individual development must have been nothing less than deadening. That effect, to some extent, remains to-day, and though the strictness of observance has in many ways been relaxed, the cult still remains a vital force in Japanese society.

That Shinto required no written code is, in the light of the above description of the home and communal cults, not very surprising. Far from its being due to the superiority of the Japanese, it is precisely the opposite. It simply means that they have elected to remain in that stage of religious development in which religion and ethics are identified, and where ethics is synonymous with custom. That which is customary is ethical; it is also lawful, and morals, as the word is generally understood, do not come into the picture. As there is no privacy in Japan, everyone's affairs are known to, and discussed by, everyone else. What need, then, of any written code when, from one's birth onwards, every person with whom one comes in contact is a moral guardian?

How much does this system, this cult of Ancestor Worship, this Shinto with all its implications, explain? The curious immaturity of the Japanese, and their peculiar childishness of outlook in so many ways, is seen to be but the natural, the inevitable result of a system which for hundreds of years has treated the people precisely as though they were in the nursery. This treatment is a key to the understanding of much of the Japanese character; it supplies the reason for the unexpected reaction of the Japanese to various circumstances. So many of them are just problem children, and who can foresee what responses to stimuli will be given by any problem child?

Naturally when dealing with adults we expect to meet with adult reaction, and when we have been disappointed over and over again, we begin to say: "The Japanese are quite incomprehensible." So they are, unless their background is thoroughly understood.

How much in their character is accounted for by this Shinto of

the home and the community ! The Japanese committee-mindedness, for example, is seen to be the inevitable outcome of a system which deprives every individual of the opportunity to think for himself, and therefore of the ability to come to an individual decision. Completely unaccustomed as the Japanese are to weighing the pros and cons of any subject in themselves, committees are their only means of getting at the several sides to a problem. But even in such committees, decisions are never decided by vote. None of the members will normally take the responsibility of a definite "yea" or "nay". Decision evolves through discussion and compromise, the latter being the invariable means of settling every question in Japanese life.

Other characteristics, such as the extreme dislike of the Japanese of being alone in unexpected circumstances, their fear of making a mistake and incurring ridicule, are simply the natural result of their never feeling secure unless they are acting as one of a group.

In the light thrown by the Communal Cult, it is easy to understand why the Japanese educational system was designed to turn out citizens "according to pattern". Of this much will be said hereafter but, as will be seen, the deliberate discouragement of individuality extending even to the suppression of individual talent lest the possessor should be tempted to think himself different from the rest—all this lies at the door of the Communal Cult.

The main influence, then, of Shinto as manifested in the Domestic and Communal Cults is one of suppression. It is of the greatest importance to emphasize that the restrictions to which every Japanese is subjected are from a source outside himself; they are not self-imposed, and hence the "will" aspect of his character has little opportunity for exercise. When this functions in later life it frequently shows itself as a mulish stubbornness from which the element of reason is singularly lacking. This is exactly what would be expected.

But, on the other hand, these cults do inculcate most thoroughly the duty of service to the community, of unselfishness and loyalty, and of obedience to those in authority. The problem that has to be solved is how to expand this willingness of self-sacrifice to the world outside the group, how to introduce the faculty of reason and intelligence into the qualities of submission and obedience.

IV

THE RELIGIOUS IMPACT: SHINTO IN THE STATE.

SO MUCH has been written and spoken about the Emperor of Japan during the years of the war, and of the position that he holds in the life and thoughts of the people, that there is a real danger of getting the whole picture of Japanese psychology out of perspective. It must also most regretfully be said that much of what has been published has been far from accurate; it has also displayed a bias which must have impressed the minds of the ordinary reading public with ideas as harmful as they have been misleading.

The Emperor concept, so far as it functions in the Japanese consciousness, embodies two quite separate and distinct ideas. There is the Emperor as an institution and the Emperor as man, and only when this duality has been grasped can a true idea of Japanese history be gained.

The person of the Emperor is comparatively unimportant. It is doubtful, indeed, if in any country of the world the person of the ruler has been treated so cavalierly, with such crude disrespect, or subjected to such humiliation as in Japan.

“Emperors have been murdered; they have been banished; they have been forcibly deposed; they have been compelled to abdicate and enter monasteries; they have been kept in such poverty that they have been more than once compelled to sell their autographs to procure subsistence!”¹

But in spite of such occurrences, the Imperial Institution has persisted and remained untouched and unaffected by any of the vicissitudes of history.

Though the early records refer constantly to the “heavenly sovereign”, there is no doubt that in the early days he was little more than the head of his clan, the Yamato.

¹ Sir G. Sansom, *A Short Cultural History*.

It was probably not until the seventh century A.D. that the "heavenly sovereign" could be termed a sovereign in the true meaning of the word—that his authority over all was recognized by the rest of the clans. The idea of sovereignty had in the course of the centuries slowly expanded and developed, until from being merely *primus inter pares*, its authority was recognized, first over the local neighbouring clans, and finally over all.

This stage was formally brought about by the Taikwa Reform, which is in reality the most important event in early Japanese history, though at the moment it is not necessary to describe its great influence on the people, or to do more than note that it definitely established the position of the Emperor as supreme, and settled on the strongest possible foundation that system of oligarchical government which was to be the curse of the Japanese people up to 1945.

From the time of the Taikwa Reform, the State Cult of Shinto may be said to have formally begun as a national religion. For, as the authority of the *Ujigami*, the progenitor of the clan, bound each clan together, so did the worship of the Imperial progenitor become a national worship, once the authority of the Imperial clan was acknowledged by all. The development may be described graphically by representing the cult of the *Ujigami* as a circle, containing within itself many lesser circles representing the Domestic Cult of the various "families". The Imperial Cult, then, would be a larger circle enclosing all the *Ujigami* circles with their smaller "family circles".

But long before the establishment of the Imperial Cult throughout the land, Amaterasu-o-mi-Kami, the Sun-goddess, had been the object of worship; for from the beginning, a fertility cult had been an essential part of Shinto. In old Japan a Phallic cult was widespread, and though there is little evidence of it in modern days it still exists in remoter parts of the country. As the early invaders settled down and agriculture became the chief activity of the people, it was natural that the Sun-goddess should be the recipient of the highest honours. Her cult then was originally distinct from that of the Imperial Cult, and so, technically, it still remains in the minds of many Japanese.

That is, she is worshipped under two aspects: as the Sun-goddess pure and simple who is the presiding deity of the country, and who looks after the welfare of all; and also as the progenitor of the Imperial family, to whom she has entrusted the government of her land. Her shrine is at Ise, where every Japanese is supposed to go on pilgrimage at least once in his life.

The Imperial Cult, formerly known as State Shinto,¹ was the worship of the Imperial Ancestors. But in so far as divinity was an attribute of the Emperor, he became the centre of the cult, and his palace was regarded as the national sanctuary. Within it is the *kashiki dokoro*, the Place of Awe. It corresponds to the *mitamaya* or *butsudan* of the ordinary household. There only the court worships, for it is the shrine of the Imperial Ancestors, the long unbroken line of former Emperors whose spirits watch over and guard the existence of the throne.

That the divinity of the Emperor has been constantly emphasized by the particular party in power is of course due to the fact that such emphasis enhanced their own authority; at the same time it has always given the people a feeling of uniqueness, of their own immense superiority as a race to all other nations.

One of the most important means employed for impressing on the people the sense of their ruler's divinity has been his seclusion. In the beginning, the Emperor's retirement from the practical work of administration was more a matter of necessity than of political intrigue, though subsequently it became a most powerful weapon in the hands of the unscrupulous; and this is how that necessity came about.

The eighth century, besides seeing the compilation of the *Kojiki* and *Nihonji*, also saw a marked intensification of the Chinese influence, which had made its first strong impression some hundred years before.

The avidity with which the ruling classes seized on and copied everything Chinese is most reminiscent of the similar enthusiasm for things European in the nineteenth century. But there was a difference. So struck were the early Japanese by the comparatively splendid

¹ State Shinto was officially banned by a Directive of General MacArthur.

culture of the Continent that at first Chinese manners and customs, methods of administration and ceremonial observances were taken over *en bloc*, regardless of the totally different background and circumstances. To attempt to pour so rich and exquisite a wine into such crude and ill-suited bottles caused those bottles to break over and over again. These breakdowns occurred particularly in matters of government and administration. Thus, by methods of trial and failure, the Japanese learned, and learned with astonishing speed, the art of adaptation rather than slavish imitation—an art of which they are now past masters.

There was one result of the Chinese influence which could not have been foreseen, but which was eagerly seized on by those around the throne as a wonderful opportunity to enhance their own authority and power. Of all the innovations brought in from China, it was the beauty, dignity and magnificence of the stately court ceremonies that most fascinated the Japanese. But they took time. Indeed, everyone who has witnessed Oriental ceremonial will agree that it seems to have been devised for a condition where time is not ! It is also one of the Japanese characteristics that whatever they import they always think they can improve—and sometimes they are justified ! So it happened in this case of Chinese court ceremonial. Constantly added to and modified by succeeding Emperors and the court officials, the ceremonies became so burdensome that it was literally impossible to find time for any other duties.

It is, of course, very possible that the additions and complications which were so constantly made were deliberately encouraged by the Court party in power with the definite object of forcing the Emperor to abandon all activity in administrative matters. In any case, that is exactly what occurred.

The Emperor's duties were twofold—religious and secular—for besides being Ruler, was he not the Chief Pontiff who alone could represent all his people before the gods ? This latter duty none could carry out but himself, whereas for the purposes of administration he could appoint a deputy. So arose that system of government which has always been characteristic of Japan, with the Emperor hidden away in his palace, surrounded by an atmosphere of mystery

and awe—the hidden god—the source of all authority and honour and the object of the profoundest respect and reverence; while his deputy or regent wielded all real authority and power.

There can be no question that the Imperial Cult, or—if the modern name be preferred—the State Cult of Shinto has in theory always been claimed as the national faith of Japan. But through the long centuries of history it is also a fact that this cult has not had the same intensive effect on the character of the people as have the other two cults. Compared with the reality and proximity of the Domestic and Communal *kami*, the conception of the Imperial Ancestors, even of the Sun-goddess herself, was shadowy and at times almost evanescent.

When the elements of Shinto, as seen in the lesser cults, are analysed, it is seen that the basic conception is the virtue of loyalty, which is shown by fulfilling the duties of absolute obedience, submission and whole-hearted service. The nation was ruled through all its groups by this notion of duty, everywhere similar in character; yet the circle of that duty for each individual did not at the most extend beyond the clan group to which he belonged. The circumference of his circle was defined by the communal cult enclosing within itself numberless small circles representing the domestic cults of each household. Thus the religion of loyalty, right up to the Restoration of 1868, was limited by the very constitution of Japanese society. For example, "a retainer was always ready to die for his own feudal lord, the head of the clan group; but not for the Shogun unless he happened to belong to his special military following" (L. Hearn).

In such a constitution of society, it is clear that patriotism, as generally understood—that loyalty which involves a conscious love for king and country—could not evolve. The shrine of Ise, dedicated to the cult of the Sun-goddess, indeed stood for the religion of the nation, but it was outside the immediate experience of the individual. The sense of absolute loyalty to the clan Lord, the Daimyo, was the paramount feeling of every Japanese up to 1868. "Each man had been taught for centuries that his first duty was to his lord, and one cannot efficiently serve two masters. Thus the

feudal government and relationship effectually suppressed any tendency to a wider horizon" (L. Hearn).

To the ordinary Samurai an order proceeding direct from the Emperor—had such a thing been possible—would not be regarded as law, for the only law that he recognized was that of his Daimyo. In the same way the allegiance of the Daimyo was direct to the Shogun, not to the Emperor, which is the reason why in Japanese history we read of so many cases of open rebellion by the great feudal chieftains against the Imperial will.

This feudal structure of society, of which a more detailed account will later be given, continued until the nineteenth century. During the last two hundred years of that period, however, the Emperor as a possible influence was even more separated from the nation than before. This was due to the deliberate policy of the Tokugawa Shogunate, a policy which had been initiated by its founder, Ieyasu, and was followed by his successors. For in the limited conception of loyalty the Shogun, as the real ruler of Japan, found a political instrument of great value.

It must be remembered that while the Emperor resided at Kyoto, Tokugawa Ieyasu had established his seat of administration at Yedo, the modern Tokyo. One of his methods of curbing possible intrigues among the Daimyo was to compel them to pass a certain period of each year in Yedo. When they departed to return to their fiefs, they were forced to leave their wives and families behind as hostages. It would naturally happen that in the course of this annual journey some of the Daimyo would normally pass through, or close to, Kyoto. Orders were therefore issued, strictly forbidding any Daimyo to approach the Imperial Palace, thus eliminating the Emperor as a possible *point d'appui* of any intrigue. The Daimyo were also forbidden to make any direct appeal to the sovereign. Other regulations were also promulgated, all with the same object—that of preventing any communication between the Imperial Court and the Daimyate. This policy, designed to put an end to all plots and intrigues, was successful in attaining its object, and kept the country at peace for over two hundred years. But it also effectually prevented the development of any real patriotism.

But in the seventeenth century there began a movement which was to result in the final overthrow of government by a Shogun. This is discussed in detail in a subsequent chapter.

Throughout the land, especially among the great Daimyo, discontent had been rapidly spreading. The coalition against the Shogunate rapidly grew larger. Just as things were reaching a climax, there occurred the epoch-making visit of Commander Perry (U.S.A.) in 1853. For two hundred-odd years Japan had been isolated from the rest of the world, and now those doors, so rigorously closed, were to be forced open.

The rulers of Japan, whatever else may be said against them, have always been realists, and never was this quality better shown than at this period of the country's history. The Shogunate knew itself to be tottering, knew that its authority was becoming less and less recognized, its administration more and more hated and despised. Should the clan Daimyo kick over the traces, civil war would rend the land to pieces.

The outside world, represented by the foreign ships, was knocking at the doors and would not be denied. A country torn by internal dissension and civil strife would be utterly defenceless; it would lie open, an easy prey to Western enterprise.

This is not the moment to enter into any details of that great event in Japanese history known as the Restoration of the Emperor Meiji. Suffice it to say here that after a short struggle the Shogunate was overthrown. The Emperor, after a period of seclusion extending over seven centuries, was at long last the real Ruler of the land, the centre of all authority and the sole object of allegiance.

It must not, however, be imagined that so new a conception was immediately grasped by the mass of the people. For centuries their whole life had been limited by family and clan interests, their loyalties enclosed within the circumference of the clan and focused on its lord. To be suddenly informed that their clan no longer existed, and that their Daimyo had ceased to wield his authority over them, was so incredible a statement that acceptance was very slow in coming.

In many cases it is perhaps hardly realized even now, for among certain of the peasantry the feudal outlook is still prevalent.

But gradually the new conception permeated the minds of the people. Gradually the old differentiated loyalties became united; the former limited sense of duty expanded into the new national sentiment of trust in and obedience to the Emperor—the apex of the national pyramid to whom all were directly bound, to whom the eyes of all were directed. The modern conception of patriotism came into being, and the Imperial Cult became the National Cult in fact as well as in theory.

But not, be it noted, at the expense of the Communal and Domestic Cults. These persisted and, as has been shown, exercise a powerful influence on the life and character of every Japanese to-day. All that happened was that the various communal groupings now became lesser circles, still containing the small circles of the domestic groups, but themselves contained within the vast circumference of the national religion.

It will doubtless come as a surprise to many to read that Emperor Worship, as distinct from that of the Imperial Ancestors, is a comparatively modern development of Shinto. But actually it is so. Professor Chamberlain, perhaps the greatest Western authority on Japan and its people, wrote in 1930: "Japan is teaching us at this very hour how religions are sometimes manufactured for a special end—to subserve practical worldly purposes. Mikado Worship and Japan Worship—for that is the new Japanese religion—is of course no spontaneously generated phenomenon; . . . every present presupposes a past on which it rests. But the twentieth-century Japanese religion of loyalty and patriotism is quite new; for it, pre-existing ideas have been sifted, altered, freshly compounded, turned to new uses, and have found a new centre of gravity."

In other words, to the Imperial Cult—that is, the worship of the Imperial Ancestors, the dead—has been added that of the existing Emperor, the living; and when the wild fanaticism of the Japanese soldiers in regard to their Emperor is recalled, it will be realized how successful has been the inculcation of this new religion.

But apart from this fanaticism the important question is how far

this development has affected the character of the people as a whole. Has its influence been evil or good—and if evil, could it be used for good?

Up to the time of the Emperor Meiji there had been no organized educational system in Japan. At the time of his restoration he was a lad of seventeen, and the leaders of the government were in complete control both of his person and his policy. Once having decided that the country must be thrown open to the world, they were determined to do things thoroughly. For this purpose, Western ideas and organizations were borrowed from all the leading nations of the world, and it was the French educational system that found favour. This was due to the fact that it was the most highly centralized of all, and when later the Japanese method is examined it will be found that there was no single school throughout the land over which the government did not hold complete control.

Once this system was established, the authorities had a perfect machinery for inculcating any ideas they liked.

One of the clauses in the Japanese constitution affirms freedom of worship to all religions, a clause that was hailed by the West as showing the extraordinary tolerance of the Japanese. In order to show its scrupulous fairness to all Faiths, the government later forbade any religion to be taught in the schools—and so no advantage could be given to one at the expense of another. It then declared that State Shinto was not a religion at all! It was a code of loyalty; it was a “philosophy”, superior to all religion, in a class by itself; and its teachings flavoured every single subject which the Japanese child had to learn.

It is well known that at no period of life can so deep an impression be made on the character as during childhood. With this in mind, the Japanese Government omitted no means of driving home the idea of the Emperor as an object of worship. But the intensity of the curriculum in this regard was graduated. It is not clear whether the authorities had the whole plan, as it was eventually worked out, all ready in their minds. Undoubtedly the main idea at the beginning was the inculcation of national unity through loyalty to one head. Gradually, however, as the idea of conquest and expansion

developed, so the teaching was expanded, until World Conquest became the logical conclusion of all that had been taught. The steps are quite clear and can be easily traced through the school text-books of past years.

The Emperor is the centre of all loyalties because he is divine. He is divine because his ancestress is Amaterasu-o-mi-Kami. The gods made Japan—it is also divine.

It was first peopled by gods—so all Japanese are divine.

Japan and the Japanese are superior to all, being divine.

The Emperor is above all other kings and rulers—being divine.

He must therefore rule the world (*Q.E.D.*).

It has been said repeatedly during the last few years that the Japanese are an aggressive people. I personally would deny this *in toto*. They are a quiet, peace-loving folk as a whole, deliberately trained to aggression, and this is shown by a fact of great significance. "Emperor propaganda" began to assume a more intense character in 1931. From that time it grew ever more active, more pointed and more ubiquitous. The militant group knew that it was useless to plunge the country into a vast war of conquest until they had the people whole-heartedly behind them. They had also to deal with a people whose character is intensely emotional and who are therefore easily swayed; who, moreover, have been accustomed for centuries to regard the word of authority as infallible. Yet it took the militarists ten years of the most active indoctrination that can be imagined before they thought the people ripe for the adventure.

When we study the effect of this development of Emperor worship, we find it has very little to its credit. One of its gravest results has been the deliberate encouragement of intellectual dishonesty. Can anything be more disastrous than this, especially when it is the teachers of the land who have been most affected? Hundreds of them were compelled to teach what they knew to be untrue—or starve with their whole families. Only an ignorant man in Japan could be honest. The sense of justice, too, was utterly perverted,

both in the courts and in the ranks of the police. How many have been tortured—some to death—to bolster a lie? Murderers have been not merely acquitted but exalted as heroes in the minds of the nation, because their victims were lovers of truth.

All branches of scholarship were corrupted: "The ethnologist must find that the Japanese are a pure race different from all others. The biologist must discover peculiar excellence in the Japanese body. . . . The historian is cribbed and confined by silly fables. The politician remains a politician barred for ever from becoming a statesman whose only thought can be the welfare of his country."¹

The same writer also refers to a certain Japanese professor, a man of wide learning and scholarship who, in the course of a conversation about one of his books, said: "This book is filled with lies. It bears my name but is not the book I wrote. I wrote an honest history of Japan. Four times in the past thirty years the police have confiscated all copies of my book. Each time a new edition has appeared containing lies where I had written the truth. Every new edition has more lies and less truth."

State Shinto has now been abolished by order of the Commander of the Allied Forces in Tokyo. It has been specifically stated, however, that it is not the intention of this order to interfere with the personal religion of the Japanese. It simply means that all official manifestations, organizations, and personnel connected with Emperor Worship, are to cease functioning forthwith. The Japanese have themselves stated that State Shinto is not a religion. Remember, too, that this Emperor Worship is an innovation grafted on to the worship of the Imperial Ancestors, and, moreover, distorted and falsely enlarged to serve the purpose of the Militarists. The complete discrediting of the Military gang and all who have worked with them would in time have brought this "new religion" to an end of itself. But the order of the Allied Commander has not only hastened its demise, but has served to show the Japanese people the opinion of the world in general. It is more than probable that the person who above all others is delighted and relieved at this order is the Emperor himself!

¹ Willard Price. Article in *Asia and the Americas*.

The immediate reaction of anyone reading this short summary of the evil effects of Emperor Worship on the conduct of Japan's intelligentsia, will probably be contempt. "Just imagine people with any claim to scholarship submitting to such nonsense. They themselves are partly responsible, for had they banded themselves together and flatly refused to be bound by these absurdities, those in power would never have dared to insist!"

But consider the other side. I once protested to a well-known journalist against the cowardice of the Press over a certain case in which a famous professor was being hounded by the Militarist gang. He replied: "What can we do when the other side possesses pistols and knives with the will to use them, and knowing that they will escape punishment?"

Any open refusal to encourage Emperor Worship would quite likely have involved being assassinated or, if such an extreme measure was not taken, it would quite certainly have meant the loss of work, permanent unemployment—for none would dare to engage one suspected of "dangerous thought"—with starvation for one's wife and children. Imprisonment and torture would also have been a likely result, with the possible implication of innocent friends and relatives. Indeed, the people lived under a veritable reign of terror. Such a criticism as that suggested above would therefore be unjust. Only those who have lived in the Japanese educational world can have any conception of the tremendous burden that has been lifted from the people of Japan by the Allied Commander's order abolishing State Shinto.

V

THE CULTURAL IMPACT: BUDDHISM

IN THE last three chapters a brief account has been given of what must be regarded as the chief influence which has gone to form the Japanese as we know them to-day. This religion of "loyalty" forms the basis of Japanese life. It is the fundamental source, the parent soil within whose deep layers are embedded the roots from which the Japanese character has sprung—the soil which has nourished and strengthened its growth and produced the plant whose nature forms the subject of this enquiry. Other influences there are, however, which have to be considered.

If Ancestor Worship is compared with the parent soil which has given the chief nourishment to the roots, then Buddhism may be likened to the humus which, added to and mixed with the original mould, has given special nourishment and strength to that curious growth.

The first formal introduction of Buddhism into Japan took place about A.D. 552, though this does not imply that nothing was known of it previous to this date. There had been much coming and going between the Korean peninsula and Japan, and it was through immigrants that the various arts of civilization became known to the ruling families of the island kingdom. The introduction of many hitherto unknown commodities, both useful and ornamental, inevitably made these immigrant communities centres of interest and observation so that, without deliberate intention, the newcomers became missionaries of new ideas and ways of life. There swiftly followed the introduction of reading and writing, as also of learning and scholarship, from which developed the general adoption of Confucian ethics and the study of Confucian writings. By introducing the love of learning, therefore, Confucianism had to some extent prepared the way for Buddhism, but it did not represent a new religion. It was a system of ethical teaching, and its ready acceptance

by the Japanese was due to the fact that these teachings were founded upon an Ancestor Worship very similar to that with which the Japanese were already familiar. It formalized the vague, unwritten code of Shinto practice, offering a kind of social philosophy, which reinforced and expanded the doctrine of Filial Piety. But it was not a religion in the real sense of the term, its chief influence being confined to the education of the ruling class, an influence which remains to the present day.

But the religion of the Lord Buddha was altogether different, in its own inherent characteristics, in the nature of its presentation, and in the extent of its influence. It was in A.D. 552 that a delegation was sent to the Japanese Court from the Prince of Pakchoi—a principality in South Korea—attached to which were several Buddhist priests. The delegation brought with it many presents, chief among which were statues of the Buddha and his saints, copies of the Buddhist scriptures, banners and other ceremonial articles.

It is not easy for us to grasp the effect of this delegation and its message on the minds of the recipients, a simple folk whose religious aspirations were limited to the invocation of deities, conceived as not so very much superior to mankind in general. To such people it must have been a revelation quite stupendous both in its scope and its novelty, which perhaps accounts for the fact that the first official "mission" seems to have left little mark, except among the Court circles. It was not until well into the ninth century that this new religion really began to spread throughout the country, though even then its influence was found mainly among the leading families. This initial development was due to the method and efforts of one of the greatest ecclesiastics known to Japanese history—Kukai (774-835), better known by his posthumous title, *Kobo-Daishi*, which means, "The Propagator of the Law".

Kukai was the son of a provincial noble, and as such was destined by his family for an official career. All candidates for this career had to pass through the "University" which had been established in the capital. Being a young man of keen insight as well as deep thought, he had little use for the luxurious and somewhat frivolous life led by the great majority of his companions.

Having undergone a course in Confucianism and found no satisfaction in it, he began to study Taoism independently. Here again he found no answer to his problems. Undeterred in his search for truth, he went to live in a Buddhist monastery. His final conversion to Buddhism was brought about by a vision. He now determined to pursue his studies in China. On his return to Japan after two years, he founded a monastery on Mount Koya. Here he gathered round him a few disciples who, after intensive training, were sent out to spread the new doctrine, he himself undertaking occasional tours.

The Buddhism taught by Kobo-Daishi was an all-embracing syncretism of a highly mystic nature.

It was clear that in a land so saturated with the intense conservatism of the ancient Ancestor Worship, with its inherent power of resisting innovation, no new religious system could possibly succeed which had the least tendency to displace the awe-compelling *kami* from their exalted position in the imagination of the people.

On the other hand, any system that would seem to render them yet loftier, more powerful, and worthy of still deeper reverence, would be assured of an enthusiastic following. Kobo-Daishi therefore fostered the idea that the chief gods of Shinto were but other aspects of Buddhist divinities. Under this system, the great Illuminator Dainichi was identified with the Sun-goddess Amaterasu, while a similar dualism was applied wherever it seemed most desirable. Under the name of *Ryobu Shinto* (*ryobu* means "two departments" or "two religions") this compound of Shinto and Buddhism, an expression of the compromising attitude so characteristic of the Japanese mind, obtained Imperial approval and support. In many places the rites of the two religions were performed within the same official building, "the majority of the Shinto sanctuaries being furnished with Oku-No-in (inner sanctuary) where a Buddhist cult was observed, while the front sanctuary was left comparatively intact" (Anesaki).

But in spite of this apparent fusion, Ryobu Shinto cannot be said to have popularized Buddhism in the real sense of the word. It did, however, intensify the religious sense of the Court and the ruling caste, and by its influence on the latter it prepared the ground for that form of Buddhism which was to permeate the people in

general throughout the Kamakura period, 1185-1308. This is known as Amida Buddhism, and its first propagator was a saintly monk known as Honen.

Honen, the only son of a local chief, was born in 1133. When he was eight years old, his father was fatally wounded by some robbers who attacked the homestead. As he lay dying, he begged his son as his last request never to think of revenge, but that instead he should become a virtuous monk.

The boy, in obedience to his father's wishes, was immediately sent to a neighbouring monastery, whence, after five years, he proceeded to the great monastic centre on Mount Hiei. But the empty formalism of the existing Buddhist cults, as well as the corruption within the monasteries, disgusted him. He felt assured within himself that the infinite compassion of the Buddha must contain a message of certain hope and comfort for the toiling masses, very different from the ornate, unreal ceremonial of the temple services, and the hairsplitting metaphysics indulged in by the more intellectual.

He left Hiei for ever at about the age of forty-five, and retired to a hermitage where, in solitary meditation, he found what he sought, and formulated his teaching.

Simple indeed it was—for its fundamental tenet was absolute faith in the redeeming power of the all-compassionate Buddha as manifested in the conception of *Amida*, Lord of the Western Paradise (*Jodo*).

Honen was, so far as his religious teaching went, the Luther of Japanese Buddhism. Everyone could be justified by faith alone; nothing further was required. By "faith" was meant complete and utter trust in the love of the Buddha and in his all-embracing compassion. No fault, sin or weakness on our part can stand in our way, because "his saving power is unconditional", and his grace is "extended to all believers".

The act of faith which, according to Honen, assures salvation, is accomplished by simply calling on the "Name of Amida", the "Name" being the mysterious embodiment of his saving power. This act of faith is embodied in the formula "*Namu Amida Butsu*", meaning, "Adoration to the Buddha of Infinite Life and Light".

This formula, as one among many, had for centuries been in general use among Shingon Buddhists. Honen insisted that it, and it alone, was to be used as an expression of devotion and gratitude, and that it was wholly sufficient in itself to bring salvation to all who used it.

Honen's teaching could not have come at a more opportune time. As will be shown later, the social condition of the common people was extremely miserable. Among the higher classes, too, those who were able to think of anything outside themselves were full of uncertainty, of disgust at the prevalent corruption, of fear for the future, of a general malaise of spirit.

There is no doubt that, judging by any standards, Honen reached a high degree of true sanctity, which drew thousands to his hermitage, to be converted by his very presence. Among the converts were many monks, while the common folk who had found nothing to help them in the presentation of the orthodox teaching, realized that here was a new gateway that opened to all the joys of a spiritual life from which they had hitherto been completely excluded. What wonder, then, that this new doctrine spread like wildfire and in the course of time penetrated to every corner of the country.

Persecution against him and his converts followed and resulted in his banishment at the age of seventy-four. He was recalled after four years of exile and died, surrounded by his disciples, at the age of eighty.

The importance of Honen's influence on the people of Japan cannot be over-estimated. But, as is so often the case with great popular spiritual movements initiated by one outstanding figure, his death was the signal for doctrinal and disciplinary disputes to start among his followers, very much as was the case in Europe among the Friars Minor after the death of St. Francis of Assisi. But the initial force of what is known as Jodo Pietism was due to Honen exclusively.

The ensuing internal strife was to bring forward another great leader, Shinran, the chief difference between the two men's teaching being Shinran's insistence on predestination, and his entire elimination of the belief that good works were necessary for salvation.

The success of Jodo Pietism was, in reality, due to the scope it gave to the people for emotional expression and release. This is

particularly to be noticed in the influence which was brought to bear by Buddhism on the Home Cult of Shinto, where it effected its most lasting modification. There was nothing in the cult of Amida to prevent the people from continuing to carry out their duties to the ancestors as laid down in Shinto ritual; indeed, many of the people preferred to follow the old Shinto form, while thousands of earnest converts professed both creeds concurrently.

With the ancient beliefs Buddhism was careful not to interfere, save by expanding them or interpreting them from a new angle. "Modifications were effected, but no suppressions; we might even say that Buddhism accepted the whole body of the old beliefs" (Hearn).

Just as the greater Shinto deities were identified with Buddha and Boddhisatvas, so in regard to the ancestral spirits, the *kami*, Buddhism taught that prayers were both necessary and meritorious, but that their direction should be modified—that they should be said not *to* the *kami* but *on* their behalf, thus bringing them comfort through the all-embracing compassion of the Buddha.

In this connection new and charming little ceremonies for the home were introduced, giving the Home Cult a wholly fresh and emotional attraction. The idea of greeting the dead on their annual visit, with little welcoming fires, was seized on with enthusiasm, as was that of supplying them with little figures to serve for oxen and horses. To-day the custom still persists exactly as in the old days, an egg-plant with four pegs of wood for legs representing an ox, while a cucumber, similarly "pegged", stands for a horse. To-day, too, as then, the ghost-ships are carefully prepared, by which the souls return over the sea to their own world. It is a sight most moving, beautiful, and appealing, to see the village folk gathered on the shore of some sheltered inlet, each family with its little ship with a light fixed in the stern. As the time comes, the ships are launched and disappear into the darkness, each group anxiously following the small flickering light until it, too, fades into the dark.

No wonder such simple ceremonies were seized on and quickly spread throughout the land. It was Buddhism, too, that introduced to every village the *Bon-Odori*, the dances of the Festival of All Souls, and also the custom of illuminating graves and house doors with

coloured lanterns, to light the way for the coming and going of the visiting dead.

It was through this constant appeal to the simple emotions of a primitive and suppressed people that Buddhism began and continued to wield an ever increasing influence. Once it had become, through the work of Honen and Shinran, a living spiritual force among the people in general, its cultural influence, hitherto effective among the upper classes only, began to be felt among every section of the populace. It was not only that Buddhist doctrine—simplified though it was—had induced a new way of thinking; it had also brought in its train all the incalculable wealth and beauty of Chinese Art in its widest sense.

Rightly to appreciate the effect of this on the people, it must be remembered that Shinto had no art worthy of the name. In the early days the primitive ghost houses were not even decorated. It is difficult for us to conceive what must have been the feelings of the Japanese when the Buddhist temples were first erected.

With what wonder, with what amaze must they have gazed at the mysteries of beauty now unfolded before them in the arts of carving, painting and decoration.

The images of the Boddhisatvas, the Buddhist saints, smiling in gold; the great paintings hung in the vast pillared halls; the wondrous frescoes on the walls; above all, the sublime statues of the Lord Buddha himself seated on the Lotus, wrapped in contemplation—the whole breathing an atmosphere of infinite peace, of “timeless bliss”; what must have been the effect of all this on the minds of those simple, untutored people, as yet unaccustomed to any kind of true art.

Again, to people only familiar with the simple architecture of the Shinto shrine, what astonishment must have been caused by the great temples erected in the cities: “the colossal Chinese gates guarded by giant statues; the lions and lanterns of bronze and stone; the enormous suspended bells, sounded by swinging beams; the swarming of dragon shapes under the eaves of the vast roofs; the glimmering splendour of the altars; the ceremonial likewise, with its chanting and its incense burning and its weird Chinese music” (Hearn).

What stunned astonishment, what awe, what delight must they have inspired !

Of course it was in the cities only that these more spectacular specimens of Buddhist artistic achievement were to be seen. But as the teaching spread among the villages, so it would be followed by the craftsmen of the faith—the image makers, the beaters of bronze, artists and wood carvers. “Gradually the graveyards became thronged with dreaming Buddhas or Boddhisatvas—holy guardians of the dead, throned upon lotus flowers of stone and smiling, with closed eyes, the smile of the Calm Supreme” (Hearn).

To mention all the different Buddhist sects which from time to time have arisen in Japan, is neither necessary nor practical. One other, however, must be shortly described, for it performed much the same function for the ruling classes, i.e. the warriors, as did Jodo for the common people. It is that form of Buddhism known as *Zen*.

Zen taught a special method of spiritual training through set exercises which, starting at concentration, passed through the stage of meditation to the goal of contemplation. The Zen devotee denounces formulas and creeds, affirming that ultimate reality can be found by all in “the innermost recesses of one’s soul. The soul which has attained this eminence of spiritual illumination identifies itself with the whole cosmos, and is therefore no more troubled by particular incidents or vicissitudes; not disturbed by and therefore neither caring for gains and pleasures, not afraid of encountering calamities and adversities, the life of an ideal Zennist may be compared to a solid rock standing in the midst of a raging sea and defying the surging billows” (Anesaki).

The advent of Zen coincided in time with the beginning of Japanese feudalism, when the military caste was taking shape and its members were claiming to be at the head of Japanese Society. The great struggle between the *Taira* and *Minamoto* clans, which will be discussed more thoroughly later, had, after thirty years of civil war, at last come to an end with the complete victory of the latter. To the head of the clan, Yoritomo, the Emperor gave the title of *Shogun*.

Yoritomo, now the most powerful lord in the country, was determined to set up his government away from the enervating atmosphere

of a luxury-loving Court. Accordingly he made his headquarters at Kamakura, a city some two hundred miles north-east of Kyoto, the Imperial capital. To his government he gave the name of *Bakufu*.¹ It was frankly a military rule, and to all intents and purposes the country was under martial law. But the people were only too thankful for an era of comparative peace and order after the ruin brought on them by the civil war, and accepted the severity of Minamoto's rule without resentment. Thus the leading warriors of Minamoto's forces—his generals and chief lieutenants—now became governors, administrators and judges. Many of these were exceedingly able men, cultivated, alert, and well versed in the culture of the period.

Not unnaturally, such men found little satisfaction in the somewhat sentimental and emotional pietism which brought such happiness and solace to the simple-minded. But in Zen they found just what they required. "The method of Zen was simple enough to be practised, even in camp life, and yet profound enough to inspire and invigorate the mind or to calm it amidst agitation and to show it the right way through the perplexities of life" (Anesaki).

That those in humbler positions should tend to imitate and follow the example of their superiors is natural, and thus it was that Zen began to exercise a considerable influence on the country at large.

As the influence of this teaching spread, Zen monasteries were set up in different parts of the country. These would "lend" their more intellectual monks as personal instructors to the local military governor and his entourage. Supported and encouraged by this authority, the monks started schools throughout the land—schools not chiefly or even necessarily for religious teaching, though this was included, but for general knowledge. Thus, as the centuries passed, Buddhism came to be the chief source of education through these *terakoya* or temple-schools, and it was perhaps in this educational work that its chief value to Japan lay. "For the common people everywhere the Buddhist priest was the schoolmaster; and by virtue of his occupation as teacher, not less than by reason of his religious office, he ranked with the Samurai. Much of what remained most attractive in the Japanese character—the winning and graceful

¹ *Bakufu* = curtain or tent government.

aspects of it—seem to have been developed under Buddhist training” (Hearn).

Even from the very brief account here given it is possible to gain some faint idea of the position that Buddhism acquired among the people. To gauge the full measure of its cultural influence is, of course, not possible. To summarize its achievements in the most general way is the most that can be done. It may be said, then, that as a moral force it led to the strengthening of authority by increasing the sense of responsibility; in the same way it encouraged submission by extending the spiritual world, and thus emphasising the potential greatness of the *kami* and the results of either fulfilling or neglecting one's duties. As teacher, it brought the opportunity of education, both in ethics and aesthetics, to all; in the latter sphere, particularly, it opened a completely new world of infinite richness and opportunity. It is even claimed that to Buddhism can be attributed the introduction and development of all that can be classed as art in Japan. It was certainly responsible for the introduction of the drama, as also for the higher forms of literature, while the intimate cultural activities of the home, typified in the “Tea Ceremony” and the “Flower Arrangement”, are directly due to Buddhist influence. It may, in short, be said that it was through Buddhism that the best part of Chinese civilization was brought into the country.

But there is another and deeper side to this question. Great art and great literature are not in themselves sufficient to secure the progress of civilization. The characteristic inability of the Japanese to think along metaphysical lines forces them to take everything *au pied de la lettre*. This habit of thought applied to the Buddhist doctrine of the illusory nature of what to the ordinary man are the realities of life, induced a general feeling of uncertainty, of pessimism. A similar crude interpretation of the doctrine of *karma* led to a fatalistic outlook on life that was prejudicial to real progress. As a matter of fact, it would be incorrect to regard the Japanese in general as fatalistic in the usually accepted sense of the term, for other influences have been brought to bear, and it is just this interplay of the various forces on the Japanese people that has produced the contradictions in their complex character.

VI

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT UP TO 1600

TO SKETCH ever so briefly the political developments of Japan in such a way as to give a just picture of the ever-changing social conditions is a task of great difficulty. Yet an attempt must be made to view as a whole the stage upon which our actors have been, and are, destined to play their parts.

Little that can be called "historical" is known prior to A.D. 600, and from what is known of those early days one has by no means an edifying picture. As in most primitive societies, the principle that "might is right" governed the whole of society.

The year 645 was notable in that it saw the promulgation of what is known as the Taikwa Reform. This was a series of ethical suggestions and recommendations rather than a code of laws, its main purpose being to make all the people directly subject to the Throne, thus abolishing the privileges of the semi-independent and undisciplined clans. The principles laid down were of course of Chinese origin, and in China had been of proved success. "To imitate the successful is essential to all who desire success." But it is equally essential that where the environment of the model differs from that of the imitator, necessary adaptations to the different surroundings should be made. This lesson Japan had not yet learned, and though the Taikwa Reform produced a great change in the social structure, yet in general the reforms failed. The reason for this was that had they been carried out in full they would have struck a fatal blow at the nobility and even at the Throne. The Chinese theory of government based the right to rule on merit, while the Japanese system was founded on the descent of the Emperor from the divine ancestress Amaterasu-o-mi-Kami. Similarly the hereditary principle ruled throughout the clans. It was therefore natural that the new code should rouse resentment among the upper classes.

Up to the Taikwa Reform there had been no central government. The masses lived in groups ruled by their local chieftain, whose power over their destinies was absolute. The object of each leader was to amass more land, either by driving out the aborigines or by robbing his neighbours. But under the provisions of the Reform the Emperor was recognized as head of the State. Members of his family, using the term in its widest sense, formed his Court. The clan leaders were nominally dispossessed of their former authority as independent rulers, but compensated by being given administrative posts with a high-sounding official title.

In general, they were not even removed, but remained as official governors of the very same territory over which they had lorded it in former days. But now each district had to provide a certain revenue for the central government, as well as defraying the cost of the governor's salary and those of all the lesser officials whom he would require. So in actual practice the Taikwa Reform was little more "than a reorganization of the ruling class of Japan", while the masses found that their lot was even harder than before. There was more efficient supervision of taxation, and after all claims had been met, there was little left for the unfortunate peasant.

The great clan families, however, in resentment at the mere suggestion of interference with their wild and lawless liberties, banded themselves together, with the result that the country found itself in the coils of a bureaucracy far more formidable in its capacity for tyranny than anything that had gone before. In this bureaucracy the controlling power was the great family of the *Fujiwara*, the head of which was to be the *de facto* ruler of Japan up to the end of the twelfth century.

Realizing that the control of the Emperor was the key to all power, the Fujiwara left no stone unturned to gain this control. They insisted on the Imperial consorts being selected from their own family, thus ensuring at the Court the presence of relatives who would always act in the family interest. Gradually they began to utilize the services of religion to forward their ends. The ethical value of religious teaching mattered little to the Fujiwara. Thus in the early years of their dominance they encouraged Confucianism

among the masses, for it emphasized the duty of submission to authority. Later, they gave equal support to the Buddhist organizations among the aristocracy, and under this lofty patronage the power of the new religion established itself on a strong foundation. Monasteries and temples of outstanding beauty and dignity were erected, and the Buddhist hierarchy became a power in the land. It was to suit the convenience of their Fujiwara supporters that leaders of the hierarchy introduced and encouraged the idea of *Insei*. By this system an Emperor could abdicate when he wished and, taking the habit of a monk, retire to a monastery for the rest of his life. In some cases the occupant of the throne was glad thus to free himself from the everlasting interference and arrogance of the great family. On the other hand, there were some cases when he proved singularly deaf to all hints as to the delights of the monastic life. The Fujiwara, to avoid such awkward situations, established the idea of placing on the throne children whom they could dominate until they became of age, and then retire them if they showed any antagonism to Fujiwara suggestions.

It was natural that the presence of an ex-Emperor among the monks should add enormously to the prestige of the monastery concerned, but it inevitably introduced the element of political intrigue into Buddhist activities. Often the retired Emperor still exercised great influence from behind the scenes. As one of a brotherhood of monks, scattered over the land, he had a perfect secret service at his command, and in that way was quite as well served as the Fujiwara themselves.

Begun thus, the political power of the Buddhist hierarchy rapidly increased, and its force as a civilizing and religious influence degenerated. By the end of the fourteenth century the great monasteries had as much power as the leading clans. They numbered their monks by the thousand—monks in name only—for they were really nothing less than fighting men. It was this corruption and degeneracy that gave rise to such movements as that of Honen and Shinran, which were described in the last chapter. Even among the aristocracy this corruption had caused much disgust, weariness and contempt.

The Fujiwara, however, had sown the seeds of forces which were

to cause their own downfall. Like all those who were eventually to succeed them, they became victims of that luxury which they had introduced and maintained. During the early days of their ascendancy they had encouraged the organization of society after the Chinese model. They themselves were at the head of that group of the ancient nobility who claimed divine descent, which as a class were known as the *Kuge*. Directly beneath the *Kuge*, in the social scale, came the Military or Warrior class, the *Buke*, into whose hands the conduct of affairs fell more and more.

Soon clans distinguished by a specifically military character came into existence. As they increased in strength and influence, so rivalries arose and clashes became ever more frequent. Eventually two such clans became predominant, the *Taira* and the *Minamoto*. For a time their mutual rivalry was kept in check by the Fujiwara; but as the authority of the latter weakened, the ambitions of the two rivals became more uncontrollable. At last, about the middle of the eleventh century, they came out in open civil war, which was to be the longest and the most bitter in Japanese history.

The Minamoto influence was mainly in the north and east of Japan—that of the Taira in the south. The whole country was therefore involved in this most bloodthirsty struggle. At first the Taira conquered, and for a short space there was a period of quietude. But the fighting soon flared up again, and this time it was the Minamoto who emerged victorious. In 1185, at the sea battle of *Dan-no-Ura*, the Taira went down for ever. The head of the Minamoto, Yoritomo, was taking no chances of a Taira revival. His measures were ruthless and horrible—nothing less than extermination.

This date 1185 is one of the most important in Japanese history, for it saw the establishment of that military rule which was to endure until 1868—the rule of a Shogun or Generalissimo. Yoritomo fixed his administrative headquarters at Kamakura in Northern and Central Japan. He had doubtless both heard and personally observed how the effete Court atmosphere of Kyoto, the royal capital, had undermined the stamina and character of the Fujiwara, and was determined that his own supporters should not be exposed to the same pernicious infection. Moreover, Kamakura was,

geographically, the centre of the Minamoto influence. To his administration the Shogun gave the name of *bakufu* which means literally, "tent or curtain government". Its real meaning in modern terms would be "military headquarters".

During the next six hundred and eighty years Japan was to have two distinct Courts—that of the Heavenly Sovereign at Kyoto, where he lived in sacrosanct seclusion, the source whence all honour and all authority was derived, for divinity could not be usurped; and that of the real executive and administrative Imperator at Kamakura, the wielder of all actual power.

One effect of this terrible civil war was the recasting of Japanese society on a feudal basis. The lot of the agricultural community—the vast majority of the population—grew worse and worse. The younger and stronger among the peasantry forsook the land and attached themselves to the standard of the local chieftain. Those who distinguished themselves were rewarded by their lord with grants of land seized from the vanquished—the size and value of which would be proportionate to their services. Thus they became not only more closely attached to their chief, but more intimately united among themselves by a common loyalty. So this professional fighting class became more and more crystallized until it developed into the distinct social class of the *samurai*, which, bound together by self-made rule and privilege, grew haughtier and more arrogant, quite forgetting the humble origin from which it had sprung.

To the great lords themselves was given the name of *Daimyo*. For their services they received from the Shogun immense tracts of land, over which they ruled as practically independent monarchs. Though there are cases where the Daimyo is known to have treated his peasantry with kindness and consideration, they were exceptional. In general, the masses were the subject of unrelieved tyranny and extortion.

It must be remembered that wealth was calculated in terms of land and its produce, and thus there grew up among the Daimyo a perpetual struggle for power in terms of land grabbing. This went on for nearly five centuries—five hundred years of clan wars which tore the country to pieces. Just as the Fujiwara had been overcome

by the Taira, who had then been destroyed by the Minamoto, so were the latter in their turn overcome by the *Hojo* family who had ruled as regents for the Shogun. So this fight for power continued until the country was in imminent danger of complete disintegration.

It requires but a small effort of the imagination to picture the condition of the unfortunate peasantry—their men folk taken from the land to join the forces of the clan lord; the land itself fought over and ravaged, or left untilled and desolate; the never ending sense of insecurity and fear for the future; the resultant famine and pestilence and all the horrors of civil war—and this state of affairs continuing year after year, generation after generation. Of course there were periods of comparative quiescence; also not all parts of the country were affected simultaneously. It is, however, true to say that throughout those five hundred years there was always some part of the land which was a centre of war and bloodshed, looting, starvation and destruction.

It was not, however, only the warring classes which brought these disasters on the people. The use made by the Fujiwara of the Buddhist organization has already been referred to, as has the consequent augmentation of the latter's political influence. During the thirteenth century this influence had become much more formidable. Partly in self-defence, partly so as not to be caught napping in the general land-grabbing campaigns, Buddhism had developed into a great military power, not unlike the fighting Church of mediaeval Europe. Many of the Buddhist monasteries had been converted into fortresses. To the horrors of normal warfare the monasteries added the more deadly, because less evident, poison of intrigue, a line of activity at which they were peculiarly adept, not only through superior intellectual ability, but also through the widespread network of monks that they controlled. As a direct result of this, and aided by the political scheming of the then ruling Shogun, a terrible event took place. In 1336 a rival Emperor was set up, and for a period of fifty-six years Japan had two Mikados.

Very briefly, this disaster arose thus. The Emperor Go Daigo, determined to break loose from the domination of the Hojo family who were then controlling the Bakufu at Kamakura, despatched

a force under one of his councillors, Ashikaga Takauji. Takauji was successful. But instead of returning to Kyoto to report, he set himself up in the place of the vanquished, thus turning against his Sovereign, and was duly declared a rebel. But whatever political action was taken against the Emperor, he yet remained the source of all honours and authority. Takauji feared that unless he received the title of Shogun from that Imperial source his influence over his followers would be gravely jeopardized. The grant of the title quite obviously would not be forthcoming. He solved the problem very simply. He brought out from concealment the most eligible member of another branch of the Imperial family, forced Go Daigo to abdicate, and set his own nominee on the throne as the legitimate successor. What followed was both interesting and characteristic.

Go Daigo, on his enforced removal into a monastery, had taken with him the Imperial Regalia—the Sword, the Mirror, and the Sacred Jewel. As these were held only by the Emperor, their possession was essential to the actual occupier of the throne. After a considerable period of bargaining and intrigue, Go Daigo sent them to his successor, and was thereupon permitted to leave the monastery and go into banishment to a place of his own choice, some two hundred miles south of Kyoto.

Having arrived, he set up his Court, at the same time sending a messenger to Takauji to inform him that the Regalia he had sent had been merely replicas, and that he, as the possessor of the genuine “outfit”, was the only legitimate Emperor! The country was once again divided, north against south, and war again ravaged the land, and raged for nearly sixty years—until 1393.

Of course, the very fact that there were two Courts, each claiming to be the only source of all authority and honour, meant nothing less than the breaking up of the whole tradition on which existing society had been built. By the time the dispute was settled, the forces of disruption which it had let loose came near to ruining the entire country. Agriculture and industry ceased to function outside the domains of a few powerful lords; whole provinces became waste land.

But the conclusion of this dynastic struggle did not mean the advent of peace for the unfortunate people. A most grim but by

no means an exaggerated picture is given by Dr. Ingram Bryan of these terrible years, which were to continue until 1573. "There was now a greater degree of contempt for constituted authority than ever before. Both national and feudal loyalty were hopelessly divided. It was a period of the most cruel deception and treacheries, greatly reflecting on the character of the civilization. . . . Bribery and corruption were the principal official motives of the age, while in all ranks of society dissipation was rife. In 1467 and for over eleven years the country was deluged with blood. Kyoto was left in ruins from fire and plunder. . . . Few of the clan chieftains died in their beds. The poisoner was abroad in the land; all cooks had their price."

Yet, in this time of utter misery, luxury and extravagance had never been so rife or so wanton among the upper classes. The old life of gorgeous palaces and aesthetic amusements continued, accompanied by incredible expenditure, without any regard to the misery and squalor of the people. The bodies of the starved were left unburied—there was nothing to defray the trifling cost of interment. At the other end of the social scale, the Imperial Court was in little better condition. One Emperor had to support himself by selling his autograph, while the body of another remained unburied for forty days, because the Imperial treasury had not the wherewithal to pay for the necessary ceremonies.

Should it seem that these dark centuries have been dwelt on unduly, the reason is that, unless we form a clear picture of the background that they afford, it is impossible for us to grasp the significance of the later periods, particularly the psychological relationship between the ruler and the ruled.

Dark indeed were those days; it was impossible for things to get any worse; and at this time of crisis there strode on to the stage the first of that great trio who were to bring to Japan first order,* then organization, and finally government.

These three were Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu. In actual fact, it was the astounding genius of Hideyoshi that made possible the achievements of the other two, but Nobunaga was the first to bring some semblance of order and discipline out of the welter of discordant factions whose feuds had

wellnigh brought the whole country to destruction. He was headstrong and utterly ruthless, with little culture—a warrior first and last. Unusually tall for a Japanese, he was well over six feet in height, of tremendous personal strength and with an awe-inspiring personality.

The following description may help us to visualize him. It is of a great lord “in full magnificence of feudal war costume. One hand bears the tasselled signal wand of a leader of armies; the other rests on the marvellous hilt of his sword. His helmet is a blazing miracle; the steel upon his breast and shoulders was wrought by armourers whose names are famed in all the museums of the West. The cords of his war-coat are golden; and a wondrous garment of heavy silk—all embroidered with billowings and dragonings of gold—flows from his mailed waist to his feet like a robe of fire.

“How the man flames in his steel and silk and gold, like some splendid iridescent beetle—but a war beetle all horns¹ and mandibles and menace despite its dazzlings of jewel colour!”²

So attired, he must have been a tremendous, fearsome figure indeed.

Nobunaga was exceedingly shrewd, and he quickly realized that the most pernicious canker in the country was the power of the Buddhist hierarchy. Their main centre was on Mount Hiei just outside the royal city of Kyoto. Scattered over the sides of this mountain were over a thousand Buddhist monasteries and temples, the whole a veritable fortress. Besides this centre there were others which existed as practically independent states.

The enormous wealth of the hierarchy was only commensurate with its insolence. Nobunaga was determined to break this apparently invincible power, protected though it was both by weapons and by superstition. In 1571 he led his forces against Mount Hiei. Ruthlessly he burned every temple and monastery to the ground. The priests, monks and other inmates were massacred wholesale; as a centre of habitation the place ceased to exist. The country as a whole was completely stupefied. Surely divine vengeance would fall on

¹ The helmet had two projections, one on each side.

² Hearn, *Out of the East*.

one who had perpetrated so monstrous an act. But, on the contrary, Nobunaga went on from strength to strength, and the people began to realize that his action had not been directed against religion as such, but against a parasitical body that had used the cloak of religion for the amassing of wealth and the protection of its holdings. The wiping out of the Mount Hiei community was in actual fact the final destruction of Buddhism as a political force, and though there were one or two centres which still defied Nobunaga, the hierarchy was never again able to exercise any undue influence in the political arena.

Nobunaga's end was as sudden as it was unexpected—through assassination by one of his vassals in 1582. He was succeeded by his chief general, Hideyoshi Toyotomi, perhaps the greatest all-round genius that Japan has ever produced. He had everything against him. In a country where "family name" and lineage counted for everything, Hideyoshi was only the son of a poor woodcutter. His appearance betrayed his peasant origin: very short, very broad, very bandy-legged, he had the face of a monkey. But this odd-looking specimen had the spirit of a giant. His history tells us that as a boy of fifteen he carefully considered the respective war lords, and, deciding to join up with Nobunaga, was taken as a horse boy. His smartness and the oddity of his appearance attracted the attention of the great Daimyo, who attached him to his person as sandal-bearer. By the time he had reached his early twenties he was not only a commander of troops but was more and more sought in counsel by his chief. He quickly showed himself to be possessed of superhuman talent for political wisdom and intrigue, no less than for military strategy. It is certainly true to say that without Hideyoshi's advice and guidance, Nobunaga would never have achieved what he did.

At the latter's death, Hideyoshi was forty-six years old. Acting with incredible speed, he took control of affairs. Just as Nobunaga had realized that a peaceful Japan was incompatible with a law-defying "sacerdotalism", so Hideyoshi now set out to subdue the rebel Daimyate.

By his brilliance as a tactician, both political and military, clan

after clan fell before him. Ruthlessly cruel—even more so than Nobunaga—he yet forbore to use extreme measures if he thought his ends could otherwise be gained. He laid down the principle that a conquered foe always remains a foe, whereas a reconciled or conciliated one is apt to become a friend. “If a man had a good head he allowed him to keep it, but on condition that henceforth he used it in Hideyoshi’s interests !” (Dr. Ingram Bryan).

When he died somewhat suddenly but apparently naturally in 1597, he could look round at a Japan not merely pacified but for the first time united under a central authority strong enough to enforce the peace and keep order.

VII

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT. THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE

BEFORE we pass on to Hideyoshi's great successor, Tokugawa Ieyasu, a brief account must be given of the former's internal reforms. For generations past, the lawless condition of the country had made any kind of settled social or economic organization a practical impossibility. Laws there were, but they were kept or broken or disregarded wholly at the will of the individual—*provided he was strong enough*. Might was right.

Though Hideyoshi came from the people, he was not of them. Indeed, when he had attained power, some of the legislation he enforced bore most hardly on the farmers and the agricultural community. One of his first edicts was that by which no one was allowed to change his employment without permission from his feudal lord. This effectually stabilized society, and enabled each Daimyo to know exactly the number of those engaged on various occupations in his domain. This was followed by a regulation which forbade anyone to change his social class. Thus a farmer must remain on the land; a samurai could not become a trader.

Perhaps his most far-reaching act was that known as the "Sword Hunt". During the long, dreary period of inter-class and civil wars, those of the peasantry who had taken part in the fighting fell naturally into two groups. There were the minority who, when a temporary peace was effected, remained with their lord as part of his military entourage, and who collectively were to form the samurai class. The majority drifted back to their lands, bearing their weapons with them. The position of the peasants was pitiable in the extreme. In the lawless condition of the land they had none to protect them against an ever-increasing exploitation and extortion, often carried out by bandits and raiders. So each village and group of villages banded itself together in self-defence, and these bodies of armed

peasantry came to be called the *Nohei*. As feudal oppression increased, the *Nohei* became a definite element in Japan's social structure. By the time of Hideyoshi it had become a potentially dangerous element. Hence the "Sword Hunt", by which all not definitely of the military class were summarily disarmed. It is reported in contemporary history that as a result of this disarmament the unfortunate peasant became "submissive and soft"! But this measure had another, and unfortunately a more lasting, result. It drew a sharp dividing line between the warrior class and the rest of the nation. It emphasized that the bearing of arms was a privilege and a prerogative of a professional warrior class, and thus gave them a prestige *vis-à-vis* the people which they were not slow to exploit to the utmost.

Law and order having to some extent been restored throughout the land, Hideyoshi turned his attention to a complete reorganization in the field of economics. He carried out a land survey covering the whole country—a very necessary step in view of the hopeless confusion that then existed in the matter of land titles. Once this had been accomplished—it took six years to complete—he was able to ensure that every parcel of taxable land was duly paying its quota. As a means of increasing the revenue he ordered that the unit of land measurement be made smaller; by this his own income, as that of his chief Daimyo, was increased by thirty per cent and over. The survey also enabled him to know exactly the extent of the provinces ruled by each of the feudal lords, the number of villages therein, and the size of the peasant population that they could support. Provided he received his feudal dues, and was satisfied that each Daimyo was ruling his province with efficiency, he cared little for the fate of the people. The latter, therefore, were at the complete mercy of their over-lord, who was only interested in getting as much out of them as was possible. In principle, the established system of taxation was "four to the lord and six to the farmer", which was not unreasonable. But other taxes over and above the official rate were extorted from the peasants, who were at the mercy of his tax-gatherers. Though the chief producers of wealth, the peasant class still remained the most neglected, down-trodden and exploited.

To describe ever so briefly the multiple activities of Hideyoshi would be beyond the scope of this enquiry. Suffice it to say that on his death, at the height of his power, in 1598, he left behind a reputation, hitherto unequalled, for brilliance, shrewdness and cruelty; but he also left a country united for the first time under a centralized authority able to control and govern.

His successor, Tokugawa Ieyasu, had been a close personal friend of both Hideyoshi and Nobunaga, so far as friendship could exist amidst the overweening ambitions of Japan's great families. It would seem, however, that he enjoyed the confidence of Hideyoshi to no small degree, for to him was left the guardianship of the latter's son and heir, Hideyori, who was a child of seven years old. But just as Hideyoshi had supplanted the heir of Nobunaga, so did Ieyasu immediately lay his plans to oust Hideyori.

But the Toyotomi family could command a wide following especially in the south. Huge forces were amassed on both sides and met at the battle of *Sekigahara* in 1610, when the Toyotomi were decisively defeated. To show the number engaged, one may add that Ieyasu had forty thousand heads of the vanquished strung up across poles on the field of battle, giving promotion to his officers according to the number of heads they could produce !

Having failed in trial by arms, Hideyori's family hoped to attain success by intrigue. Ieyasu realized that so long as they existed as a focus of rebellion there could be no peace in the land. On one trumped-up excuse or another he attacked their stronghold at Osaka in 1615, and the Toyotomi clan was literally annihilated.

Ieyasu was now able to give his whole attention to the question of internal administration. He was also determined so to organize it as to ensure that his family would remain in control after his death.

How ably he accomplished this is shown by the fact that the Tokugawa Shogunate endured until 1867, giving to Japan no less than fifteen military governors of the same family under whom the country experienced a regime both of order and stability for two hundred and fifty years.

In 1604 Ieyasu received from the Emperor the title of Shogun and set up his capital at *Yedo*—the modern Tokyo. It was clearly

chosen for strategic reasons. Japan's eastern coast line forms an obtuse angle, the two arms running from north to south and from south-west to north-east. At the point of their intersection is Yedo; it thus lay at the very centre of the lines of communication, forming an ideal control post. It was also at the edge of the great Kwanto plain, largely composed of marshland. No force, therefore, could hope to approach it undetected. The very nature of the soft marshy land further served the Shogun's purpose. The cost of building the city was to be defrayed by levies on the different Daimyo, each province being assessed according to its capacity. To build on marshland is an exceedingly costly operation, and thus the trouble-making potentiality of the Daimyate was weakened. Ieyasu further ordered each feudal lord to erect a palace in Yedo for himself, and made it understood that he expected them to be commensurate with their individual standing and dignity.

Inevitably competition and rivalry in ostentation and luxury ensued, which added to the process of financial attenuation. Subsequently Ieyasu issued orders that every Daimyo had to pass a certain period every year in Yedo, and on his departure for his province had to leave his wife and family behind as hostages. Thus the Shogun's city became a military headquarters *par excellence*, and the centre of the country's wealth, to which flocked all the leading artists and craftsmen, merchants and artisans.

Ieyasu was equally far-seeing in his management of the Imperial city of Kyoto. He saw to it that the Emperor and his Court had an adequate civil list, thus removing a possible cause of unrest. He established a governor, *shoshidai*, in the city to watch the conduct of the court nobles and keep Yedo informed of all their activities. Especially did he encourage the court officials and their entourage to devote their time to aesthetic and less reputable dissipations, that they might not occupy their minds with political matters, or the affairs of the nation.

The question of chief importance, however, is the effect of the Tokugawa regime on the general masses—the people. The structure of Japanese society had, through the regulations of Hideyoshi, already become organized to a certain extent, after the unutterable

confusion into which it had been thrown. Ieyasu and his successors were to impose upon it a regime of extraordinary severity.

The Chinese system, which had been adopted after the Taikwa reform, was now taken as the basis, but on it was superimposed such a series of rules and regulations as forced the people into clearly defined groups and classifications from which there was no escape.

Above society in general stood the Kuge, the ancient nobility claiming the ancestry of Emperors and gods. At the other extreme below all, was the *Eta*, or class of outcasts, the descendants of slaves.¹ They were regarded as a pariah people, the "untouchables", who followed certain occupations in the monopoly of which they were legally confirmed. Their ranks supplied the official torturers, executioners and grave-diggers. Most of them followed, as they still do, the business of tanners, and they alone had the right to slaughter and flay animals.

Between these two extremes came the mass of the people, divided into four distinct classes, which fell into two unequal groups—the Military caste, the Buke, and the rest, collectively known as the *heimin*, the common people.

Among the Buke the only distinction between lords and simple warriors was that of rank, based upon income and family lineage or title. All were samurai, from the most powerful lord to the humblest retainer. An extremely important group of the Buke were the special retainers of the Shogun himself, who rallied round him in war time. They were known as the *Hatamoto*, which means, "under the flag". They were eighty thousand in number. Each of them had received from the Shogun grants of land which yielded revenue from ten thousand *koku* down to one hundred. All revenue was calculated in terms of a *koku* of rice. On a low average it was worth about one pound sterling, but sometimes three times as much.

The natural result was that the most influential class in the country had a keen interest in keeping up the price of the staple article of food. In the latter years of the Shogunate, when the

¹ Though the peasantry are still hardly affected, the occupation has produced a startling change in the cities, Tokyo especially. The present President of the Lower House is actually an *Eta*.

authority of the Bakufu was growing weaker, the system gave rise to many "rice riots". The incomes of some of the chief Daimyo were enormous. Thus the great Prince of Kaga had an annual revenue of one million two hundred thousand *koku*; the income of the last Shogun was reckoned at eight millions.

At the time of Ieyasu, the Shogun ruled over two hundred and ninety-two Daimyo, heads of provinces of greatly varying extent. One of the first acts of Ieyasu was to check the despotism and tyranny of these petty sovereigns by so restricting their powers that undue oppression or cruelty might even involve the loss of their estates. In theory the peasant had the right of appeal against unjust taxation and exploitation—even up to the Shogun himself. But to do so in practice was a most perilous undertaking. Lord Redesdale has described just such a situation in his story, "The Ghost of Sakura" (*Tales of Old Japan*). It is a remarkable exposition of the relationship of lord to peasant, admirably portraying the Japanese interpretation of self-sacrifice, and the struggle between the sense of group loyalty and that due to the lord. The story should be read in full. It is rich in incidents showing the curious workings of the Japanese mind, as also the immense, almost unbridgeable gulf that existed between the lord and the producers of his wealth.

The leading Daimyo had their great and lesser vassals, and each of these again had his force of samurai. There also developed a special class of soldier farmer called *goshi*, who seem to have formed a kind of yeomanry. They were the relics of the former *nohei*, and, though not samurai, possessed, as independent landowners, both privileges and powers.

The other three sections of the social edifice, classed together as the *heimin*, were, in order of seniority, the farmers—*hyakusho*: the artisans and craftsmen—*shokumin*: and the merchants—*akindo*. The Shokumin included all crafts such as smiths, carpenters, weavers and potters. Among these the sword-smith was *facile princeps*, enjoying the patronage of the highest in the land and thereby sometimes rising to dignities far beyond his class. Experts affirm that when the art was at its height the Japanese blade excelled anything that the forges of the West could produce.

All the principal crafts had guilds, and in general trades were hereditary. Hideyoshi had enacted that no one might leave either his guild or his class, and this law was made even more rigid and inescapable under the Tokugawas.

At the bottom of the social ladder—for the Eta were outcasts—was the Akindo, the merchant class, including bankers, merchants, shopkeepers and traders of every kind. The superior classes, especially the Samurai, regarded the business of making money with extreme contempt, which perhaps partly accounts for the readiness with which they spent it !

These three classes, then, together comprised the Heimin or "common folk". The gulf between them and the Samurai was immense and unbridgeable. It is no exaggeration to say that the two groups lived in different worlds. Their mentalities were poles apart. They thought differently and talked differently—for the actual language used by the Samurai was quite different from that of the masses. Neither was there the smallest attempt on the part of the Samurai to try to understand the life of the common folk.

Such, then, is a very rough picture of Japanese society as it was moulded under the rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate. It was a society regimented from within and without, all action being both negatively and positively controlled. The guiding policy of the Bakufu was to keep all subservient to the Shogun ; and the Heimin to their lords. "To effect this end laws were often kept secret so that circum-spection might be all the more imperative. . . . The weaker had to submit to the stronger without question. The upper had absolute authority over the lower in all the relations of life."¹

It was during this period that the virtue of loyalty was moulded and fixed into that distorted form with which, alas, we are but too familiar, but which has also produced in the Japanese character a capacity for self-sacrifice perhaps unequalled elsewhere. This was largely due to the system of *Shushi*, itself a syncretic system combining Buddhist metaphysics and psychology with Confucian Ethics. "Shushi was the stoicism of the Orient" (Anesaki), and it was adopted by Ieyasu as the orthodox system of morality for the people.

¹ Ingram Bryan, *Civilization of Japan*.

It was a development of Zen Buddhism, and its propagation among the people was in the hands of its monks. The system of Shushi "presupposed the heavenly sanction of the social order as conceived by the communal ethics of China. . . . Expressed in social terms, moral life was nothing but the subordination of the ruled to the ruler, of children to parents, of wife to husband, of younger brothers and sisters to elder" (Anesaki).

Under this teaching, almost inevitably perverted in its passage from theory to practice, the morals of the nation became hardened and mechanized "until loyalty meant indifference to humane relations, in duty to lords and superiors generally" (Ingram Bryan). Loyalty and piety became little more than a robot-like obedience to superiors. Loyalty justified any crime.

The regimentation of the people of Japan, and the extent to which they were controlled, can be inferred by a very brief glance at the sumptuary legislation imposed upon them by the Tokugawa Shogunate. "Rigidly as the family cult dictated the behaviour in the home, strictly as the commune enforced its standards of communal duty, just so rigidly and strictly did the rulers of the nation dictate how the individual—man, woman, or child—should dress, walk, sit, speak, work, eat and drink" (Hearn).

The inclusiveness and minutiae of these regulations seem almost incredible. To what an extent they affected the individual is best indicated by those which applied to the peasantry, but we must not forget that *mutatis mutandis*, the same kind of restrictions were imposed on every class, not excluding the Samurai themselves.

In the case of the farmer, there was hardly any detail of his existence that was not prescribed by law, from the size, cost and form of his house down to such trifling matters as the number and quality of the dishes to be served at meals. The regulations varied according to the assessed income of the individual. Thus one who had an annual income of a hundred *koku* (about £100) of rice might build a house sixty feet long. If he were assessed at fifty *koku*, forty-five feet was the limit; while only thirty feet was permitted to a man with ten *koku*. In the house of the first of these—the man

with an income of a hundred koku—no room might contain an alcove; neither must the house be roofed with tiles. None of the family might ever wear silk, and at no time might any member make valuable gifts to friends.

Should a small party be given, the rice wine—*o-sake*—must not be served in wine cups, but in soup cups! On the occasion of the annual Boys' Festival the presents to be given to the child were limited to "one paper flag and two toy spears"; and so it went on, and the lower the income, the more humiliating did these restrictions become.

The peculiar constitution of society made it possible to enforce this sumptuary legislation. Each community was organized in groups of five households called *kumi*, and as the *kumi* was responsible for the conduct of each and all of its members, so each member was responsible for the conduct of the rest. Responsible for the serious offence of giving more than one paper flag to a little boy! As Hearn aptly writes, it is "the implacable minuteness—the ferocity of detail" of these regulations that makes them so repulsive and so inexplicable to the modern mind of the West.

When a man's life was legally regulated in such tiny matters as the cost of his wife's hairpins and the price of his child's doll, it was not to be expected that such a thing as freedom of speech should be tolerated. It did not exist. The hierarchical order of society was reflected in the ordering of pronouns and verbs and in the prefixes and suffixes attached to adjectives. To some extent the same applies to-day. There is still a special Court language, while grammarians tell us that there are sixteen terms corresponding to "you" and "thou", according to whether the speaker is male or female, inferior, equal, or superior. In Tokugawa days there were many more, while each grade of society had an "I" especially its own. The regulations, too, were more positive than negative; what was not to be said was not nearly so important as what must be said, which was laid down in innumerable rules.

Detailed regulations corresponding to those for speech were also prescribed for demeanour and etiquette. These did not apply merely to bows and obeisances, but even to the facial expression, the manner

of smiling, the conduct of the breath. On all sides, in every direction, in almost every activity of life, nothing but prescriptions and restraints!

But what happened if some unfortunate chanced to make a mistake?

First there was the right of the Samurai, confirmed by Ieyasu, to cut down any of the Heimin guilty of rudeness. Rudeness was defined to mean "a manner other than is expected!"

Legal punishment for any wrongful acts, either of omission or commission, included six degrees of penalty according to crime. These were reprimand, confinement, flogging, banishment, exile to an island, and death. The latter penalty had five degrees; simple decapitation, the same with exposure of the head, burning at the stake, crucifixion, and sawing asunder. But note that these applied to the Heimin only. In the case of a capital crime, a Samurai could commit *seppuku*.

To Western minds this legislation cannot appear other than the most tyrannical, the most despotic and cruel that it is possible to conceive. Moreover, the cruelty was not merely physical—it was directed against the whole of a man's being. It was the torture of "The Little Ease" applied to society as a whole. There was no direction in which the community might stretch itself and relax. And of course there were the ever-present restrictions of the Home and Communal Cults, upon which those of the government were superimposed. Nor was there any way of shirking or evading these obligations of law and custom. The very organization of society, with its overlapping and inter-related system of mutual responsibility and its habit of "living in public", rendered discovery a certainty. However, just in case this might not be sufficient to ensure obedience, there was the notorious spy organization of the Tokugawas, which in thoroughness has never been surpassed.

Of course the result of such a system was "to suppress all mental and moral differentiation, to numb personality, stifle originality and to establish one uniform and unchanging type of character" (Hearn).

It is true that as the Tokugawa Shogunate continued, many of these regulations were relaxed both by legislation and by gradual slackening of discipline. The Tokugawa Shoguns followed the same

course as their predecessors. Luxury, absolutism and cruelty begat licence and general sensuality. The Shoguns themselves fell into idleness and effeminacy, so that the administration was sometimes left entirely to their ministers.

Yet even so, the effect of those centuries remains: for the mind of every Japanese, save those of the more advanced thinkers, bears evidence of that repressive force by which their ancestors were disciplined, moulded and compelled.

Yet there is another side. It has been emphasised before that if one is to make an accurate estimate of Japanese psychology, one must try to see things through Japanese eyes, to think through the Japanese mind—and that of the period concerned. One must remember the condition of the country and its society when—after centuries of clan and civil wars, of misery and squalor, of the breaking down of all authority, of all discipline—power at last fell into the hands of those three great men who had the strength to wield it, the ability to direct it, and the personality to control it.

That iron discipline imposed by the Tokugawas, evil though its effects have been in many ways, yet had an ethical value of no mean proportion.

To start with, the nation at long last had the inestimable boon of peace, and this meant a sense of security to which all had for centuries been strangers. The Tokugawa Shogunate compelled each succeeding generation to practise a stern frugality which, in view of the extreme poverty of the nation, was essential. The legislation imposed reduced the cost of living and enforced simplicity and the straitest economy; it encouraged courtesy and a stern hardihood of life. Furthermore, it was impressed on a people already accustomed to the restrictions of the Communal and Domestic Cults of Shinto; already saturated with the idea of a loyalty which could only be manifested by implicit obedience. And therefore, as contemporary records show, the people accepted these, to us, intolerable regulations with complete trust in the good faith of their rulers, and with deep thankfulness for the priceless boon of peace and security which the government afforded them, and to which they and their forefathers had for so long been strangers.

VIII

THE CHRISTIAN IMPACT AND ISOLATION

“CHRISTIANITY is one foreign influence that did not leave an imprint on Japanese life and thought” (J. D. Maki)¹. This is a somewhat sweeping statement, the accuracy of which must be judged after a review of all the facts. Accounts of the Christian adventure, particularly with regard to its benefits or otherwise to Japan, vary strangely, according to the views of the writer. Thus Lafcadio Hearn calls it “the greatest danger that ever threatened Japanese national integrity”. He refers to the Catholic presentation of the Faith as “this black creed”, “this pitiless faith”, and so forth, thus clearly showing the direction of his sympathy and antipathy. But whatever the personal bias of the different writers, they are all agreed on two facts—the appalling thoroughness and cruelty of the persecution, and the almost unbelievable, super-heroic endurance of its victims.

It is an astonishing story that covers just ninety years, passing from the introduction of the Faith through remarkable success, followed by ever intensifying oppression, to its final extermination.

St. Francis Xavier landed at Kagoshima in 1549, when Nobunaga was rising to power. The great Jesuit missionary of the East had been working in Goa, where he heard of Japan’s existence from some Portuguese sailors who had been wrecked on those islands. With them was a young Japanese, Anjiro, who had fled from his country to avoid arrest for having killed a man in a quarrel.

He was brought before St. Francis, who questioned him. Anjiro’s answers filled the saint with the desire to spread the Gospel among the Japanese. He set out on a Chinese pirate ship, taking with him a certain Father Torres and a lay brother Fernandez. He was, of course, accompanied by Anjiro, by this time a Christian, and two other Japanese who had likewise been baptized.

¹ *Japanese Militarism.*

Japan was in a state of turmoil. Nobunaga had not yet secured control, and the inter-clan feuds were raging.

These circumstances to some extent favoured the new mission in quite an unlooked-for manner. The southern Daimyo had already experienced the superiority of Western weapons—firearms in particular—through dealings with Portuguese traders. They were tremendously anxious, therefore, to attract the latter to their various ports.

When the Japanese saw the immense respect paid to the mission priests by the Catholic Portuguese crews, they welcomed them as a means by which they might procure more and better weapons than their neighbours. This element must be taken into account in estimating the early successful establishment of the Jesuit mission in the southern island of Kyushu, where the powerful Daimyo of Satsuma and Bungo held their fiefs. Xavier himself made his way to the capital, Kyoto, hoping to see and convert the Emperor, but he found the city a burnt-out ruin. He returned, and in 1551 decided to go back to India to bring reinforcements. In twenty-seven months this most fearless and fervent apostle had started Christian work in four of the most important provinces of Japan, and had seen some hundreds of converts enter the fold. A year later, 1552, having obtained his reinforcements, he landed them in Japan and himself set off for the mainland, consumed with the passion to evangelize the Chinese. He was struck down by fever and died on an island off the China coast.

By 1561 there were five churches in Japan and baptisms were rapidly increasing, Christians now being numbered by thousands. A most important year was 1563, for it saw the conversion of the first great Daimyo, the lord of Omura, who was baptized with twenty-five of his leading retainers. It is necessary in fairness to recall the extremely loose conception of religion held by the Japanese; also that in one or two cases some conversions were due to the order of the feudal lord who would be obeyed without the slightest hesitation. It must also be recorded that at first the new religion was occasionally taken for another form of Buddhism. But there is no doubt that the Faith was definitely spreading. With the rise

to paramount power of Nobunaga the position of the mission rapidly improved. Though he himself never became a Christian, he showed the Jesuits marked favour. He was evidently greatly impressed, not only by their learning, but also by the extremely disciplined lives that they led. Also he was partly actuated by his intense hatred of the Buddhist priesthood, with whom he compared the foreign priests, to the immense advantage of the latter. Whatever be the reasons, he gave them every encouragement, so that the work went forward by leaps and bounds. By 1582, when Nobunaga was assassinated, it is reckoned that there were two hundred churches and one hundred and fifty thousand Christians, including three powerful Daimyo of Kyushu. Organized by these three, an embassy was sent to Europe. After passing through Portugal and Spain—its members being treated everywhere as personages of royal rank—it came to Rome to pay homage to the Pope. Now this very embassy had, curiously enough, a share in the eventual downfall of the Church in Japan. The magnificence and splendour of its reception had undoubtedly been intended to impress upon its members the glories of a civilization based on Christian culture. That they were tremendously impressed is certain, but, as will be seen, the reaction to their report when they returned to Japan in 1590—they were eight years absent—was most unfortunate. The current had already set against the mission. Hideyoshi at first continued Nobunaga's policy of favouring the Jesuits, but suddenly, five years later, and in a single night, his attitude completely changed. On July 25th, 1587, he issued his first anti-Christian edict, ordering the expulsion from Japan, within twenty days, of all the Jesuits. It is significant that he had been visiting the fiefs in Kyushu, where some of the Daimyo were showing tendencies to restlessness under his rule.

He was doubtless impressed with the Christian organization, and perhaps had not fully realized the extent of its influence. The Jesuits had likewise been very outspoken in regard to his personal debaucheries and licentiousness. But the reason for the edict was most probably the memory of the former Buddhist coalition which had caused so much trouble previously; and Hideyoshi was not

going to run any risk of a repetition. His intention, therefore, was rather to weaken any political power the new religion might acquire than to destroy the Faith itself.

It must also be taken into account that those early Jesuits did not mince their words in regard to the viciousness and corruption of the Buddhist monks, and in this way incurred their most venomous hatred and enmity.

The edict, however, was not enforced; and the Jesuits, who had gone into hiding, emerged and continued their work which, up to 1595, prospered exceedingly. But now occurred a series of most deplorable incidents. The Pope had expressly forbidden any Order but that of the Jesuits to work in Japan. Their mission had from the beginning been closely connected with the Portuguese, who held the Japanese trade monopoly by express warrant from Philip II. Spanish merchants became jealous, and introduced Franciscans and Dominicans into the country to forward their interests. These flatly defied the Papal command.

Shortly after, a Spanish ship was wrecked on the Japanese coast, and the cargo and crew were seized. The captain threatened vengeance, expatiating on the vast power of his sovereign, which he illustrated by showing the extent of the Spanish dominions on a map. He added that the usual procedure was for the king to use missionaries as a prelude to trade and conquest. This, of course, came to the knowledge of Hideyoshi, who remembered the embassy's report; and open persecution began. The Spanish Franciscans were the first to suffer, three fathers and three brothers, with twenty Japanese, being publicly crucified at Nagasaki, February 5th, 1597. A second edict of expulsion was issued, and the surviving Franciscans were deported. Attacks were also made on churches and mission buildings, and many were destroyed.

When Ieyasu acceded to power in 1598, he was at first too much occupied to enforce Hideyoshi's edicts, and again the missionaries came out of their concealment and started active work, with the result that by 1600 seventy thousand new converts had been added, bringing the total up to three hundred thousand.

Unfortunately the great majority of these cases came from the

southern Daimyates, the area that favoured the cause of the Toyotomi family against the Tokugawa. The forces of the former, which were so decisively defeated at the battle of Sekigahara, included four Christian lords, as well as a great pro-Christian Daimyo, Konishi. Thus the Shogun came to regard Christianity as synonymous with disloyalty to himself.

But now the situation became definitely unfavourable for the missionaries through the arrival of Dutch merchants, the first of whose ships had on board an English pilot, Will Adams. Naturally they were closely interrogated, particularly as to their religion, and though in the case of Adams it is known that he hated the awful persecutions that followed, and in a small way tried to mitigate them, yet it cannot be supposed that either he or the Dutch would have spoken well of Spanish Catholicism of that period.

But Ieyasu did not yet take overt action. On the contrary, he continued to show favour to the missionaries, owing to the need for a continuation of commerce with foreign countries, particularly while he was in process of moulding the nation into the pattern he had in view. He continued this policy until 1612. It was not until 1614, when he issued his edict of annihilation, that the great persecution began. By that date, out of the total of eighty-four provinces of Japan, Christianity had actually penetrated seventy-six; and though in many of these its representatives were a mere handful, yet its general dissemination had evidently made the Shogun apprehensive. The wording of the essential part of the edict shows clearly the direction in which his suspicions lay.

"The Kirishitan band have come to Japan, not only sending their merchant-vessels to exchange commodities, but also longing to disseminate an evil law, to *overthrow right doctrine* so that they may *change the government of the country* and obtain possession of the land. This is the germ of great disaster and must be crushed. . . . Japan is the country of the gods and of Buddha; it honours the gods and reveres the Buddha. . . . The faction of the *Bateren*¹ disbelieve *in the way of the gods* and *blaspheme the true Law*—violate right-doing and injure the good. . . . They truly are the

¹ *Bateren*. Japanese corruption of *Padre*.

enemies of the gods and of the Buddha. . . . If this be not speedily prohibited, the *safety of the State* will assuredly hereafter *be imperilled*; and if those who are charged with ordering its affairs do not put a stop to the evil they will expose themselves to Heaven's rebuke. These missionaries must be instantly swept out, so that not an inch of soil remains to them in Japan in which to plant their feet; and if they refuse to obey this command, they shall suffer the penalty. . . . Let Heaven and the four seas hear this. Obey!"¹

The phrases italicized (not of course in the original) clearly show the line of the Shogun's thought. The missionaries would naturally insist that man's loyalty and obedience were due first to God, and then to the Church and its Head, the Pope at Rome. By so doing they obviously undermined the Japanese conception of unreasoning loyalty and obedience to their immediate earthly superiors. Why should they teach this? With what object? Ieyasu remembered the report of the returning embassy, twenty-four years previously; he would also have in his mind the veiled threat of the Spanish ship's captain as to the strength of his sovereign, who used missionaries as the forerunners of conquest; there were the reports, too, of his spies, and the slanders of the Buddhist hierarchy, all of which would go to confirm his suspicion that the missionary activities in general were really aimed at nothing less than an overthrow of his government. Then there was the strife between the different Orders, which made for internal unrest and disturbance of the peace, not to mention the open outbreaks between the Christian and Buddhist communities. Here definitely was a "germ of great disaster" which must be destroyed before it developed. The days of the great persecution were to begin. They were to continue almost without cessation until April of 1638—twenty-four years of unrelenting terror and torment unequalled in the whole history of Christian martyrdom.

On the death of Ieyasu, 1616, he was succeeded by his son Hidetada who continued and intensified the anti-Christian policy of his father.

¹ Translation by Satow. Whole document to be found in *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. VI, pt. 1. Above selection from L. Hearn, *Japan, An Interpretation*.

He was an able man, and there is no doubt that he was actuated by his political conviction. But his son, Iemitsu, to whom Hidetada transferred the Shogunate in 1623, was a far less desirable character.

The Christians had prepared themselves for the storm. "Confraternities of Martyrdom" were organized. "Even little children scourged themselves till the blood ran to accustom themselves to pain; for many of them, as they knew, would be called to suffer with their parents."¹

As the years passed, so the persecution became ever more organized and more bitter. Its intensity varied in different provinces, the greatest cruelties being practised in those domains in which the Daimyo had shown the Christians marked favour, or where he was an apostate Christian. Only thus could these great lords free themselves from any latent suspicion of still being infected by the foreign poison. The methods of execution varied. Simple decapitation was rare. More usually execution was carried out by burning at the stake, or crucifixion in the Japanese fashion, where the victim was bound to a cross and then pierced with spears, the speed of death's release depending on the instructions given to the executioners. Other victims in the north were put naked into a pool of water to freeze to death; yet others in the south were plunged into boiling sulphur springs. Some were sawn asunder with bamboo saws, while later on the yet more horrible torture of the "Fosse" was invented, by which the victim was hung head downwards over a pit into which every kind of filth was thrown. He was bound in such a way as to retard the circulation of the blood, while one hand was left free to make the recognized sign of recantation. The slow congestion of blood in the head produced agonies of suffering, and death rarely supervened in under three days.

Apart from the horrors of such approaches to death, the Christians were exposed to frightful temptation. The test of trampling on the Cross was devised. A plaque,² on which was inscribed some symbol

¹ G. H. Moule, *The Spirit of Japan*.

² Such plaques were called *fumié*—derived from the Japanese *fumu*, to tread upon, and *e*, a picture.

of the Faith—a Cross, the name of Christ, or a figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary—was placed on the ground. The suspect was brought before the local judge, who was seated on a low dais. In front of him lay the plaque upon the ground. On his right was seated a clerk at a low table on which were title deeds to land, or a pile of silver which would be given to the accused if he or she recanted. On his left stood the torturers with all the grim panoply of their office well in evidence.

What incredible courage these poor people showed—for the number of apostasies was unbelievably small—in view of the newness of their faith, the terror before them, and *the age-long submission to state authority* inborn for centuries in every Japanese.

And so the terrible persecution went on, to culminate in what has been called “the Christian Rebellion”, or, more accurately, the Shimabara Revolt.

The peasant inhabitants of the island of Amakusa in the Southern Daimyate of Arima in Kyushu—the great majority of whom were Christian—had been driven to desperation, not only by the vicious cruelty of their feudal lord in persecution, but also by his extortionate demands in taxation and general exploitation.

They rose in rebellion against him, led by a young Christian who claimed supernatural powers. They were joined by hundreds of Christian refugees from other parts of the country. The actual fighting force was only twenty thousand men, encumbered by some seventeen thousand women and children, but it took a government force of a hundred thousand men, aided by Dutch artillery, to overcome them.

The rebels seized on an old castle on the Shimabara peninsula, and there held out for three and a half months against repeated attacks from the besieging army. “The battlements were decorated with wooden crosses and Christian banners, while Christian war-songs sounded from the walls” (G. H. Moule).

Only when ammunition and provisions were exhausted was this gallant band overcome. On April 12th, 1638, a general assault was delivered, and the survivors—men, women and children—were completely wiped out.

It is revealing to note that the Daimyo of Arima, whose tyranny had been the direct cause of the rising, was condemned to commit *seppuku*.

Of course the effect of this incident was to make Iemitsu livid with rage. There were comparatively few Christians now left undiscovered, and most of them were detected and disposed of with the usual accompaniments of torture, terror and temptation.

Directly arising from the fear that the new religion was a cloak to hide the real intention of overturning the government of the country, the previous Shogun, Hidetada, had issued an edict which was to have the most disastrous effect on his country's normal development. It was an order that closed the gates of Japan to the entry of all foreigners from overseas. It is possible that the precaution was originally meant to be temporary, but as it was discovered how far the Faith had permeated, the edict was made even more rigorous. After the Shimabara rising, every foreigner was expelled with the exception of the Dutch, who, for the sake of trade, were permitted to remain, but under conditions so bad as to make life hardly worth living. But the desire for profit-making induced them to endure such conditions for two hundred years !

In the meanwhile all half-caste children of Spanish or Portuguese origin were exiled from the land. No Japanese might leave the country under pain of death. The same penalty was imposed on any who, having gone away, returned to their homeland. All ships over a certain tonnage, and therefore of ocean-going capacity, were destroyed, and any foreigners thrown up on the coast by shipwreck or typhoon were instantly killed. Every possible way of exit or entry was closed, locked, bolted and sealed. Japan was totally isolated from the whole world, and was to remain so for more than two hundred years—isolated during those most crucial centuries when other countries were progressing as never before.

From every human standpoint this initial attempt at the Christianizing of Japan was a dismal failure. In the short space of ninety years, 1549-1638, it had enjoyed phenomenal success, only to fall to complete ruin—annihilation. How can this be accounted for ?

As we look back on those tremendous years of the Church's

history, we may see the course of events with *their* surrounding circumstances in perspective—always remembering, however, that a drawing even in perspective is in fact a distortion of the original !

The general political conditions of Japan at the time of St. Francis Xavier's arrival were certainly not favourable to the propagation of a new faith, though the desire of the Daimyo for foreign trade in general, and weapons in particular, to some extent offset this. But there was the intense opposition of the Buddhists to contend with, and though owing to Nobunaga's policy, they could do little in the early years of the mission, yet their period of obscurity soon passed, and they were able to retaliate on the newcomers with all the advantages that their Japanese nationality and influence over the officials and people gave them.

How was it then that the missionaries were able to achieve such success and in so short a time ?

When St. Francis first met Anjiro in Goa he asked him how he thought the Japanese would react to the Christian message. Anjiro replied: "My people would not immediately become Christians, but they would ask you a multitude of questions, weighing carefully your answers and your claims. Above all, they would observe whether your conduct agreed with your words." It was in the fulfilment of this last condition that the great strength of the Jesuits was seen. It was in the strictness of their lives, and their high morality and self-control, together with their practical charity shown in their care for the sick and the outcast, that their power lay.

They were, too, men of marked culture and wide learning, a fact which appealed greatly to Nobunaga and members of the ruling class. But essentially their teaching drew the people because they saw from the missionaries' behaviour, that when it was lived and practised, it resulted in outstanding *goodness*, than which there is nothing more truly attractive. And then there was the message itself—so tremendous in its inherent power as to support thousands of men, women and children through the fearsome agonies of torture and slowly-approaching death, which they went to meet with a joyous gallantry that proved itself invincible.

And yet the mission failed, and the reasons are not hard to find. There were, to start with, the suspicions of the Shoguns, which had been aroused by the reports of the immense material power of Catholic Spain and Portugal which had been given them by the returning embassy and confirmed by Will Adams and the Dutch. It is known from the letters of the former to his wife, that he was not actuated by any hatred towards Catholicism as such, nor towards the missionaries. He bitterly deplored the persecution, but was helpless. Not so the Dutch: and there is no doubt that their desire to capture the trade for themselves led them to stop at nothing in their efforts to oust the missionaries. Most fatal of all was the open enmity between the Orders. Had the Dominicans and Franciscans obeyed the commands of Pope Gregory XIII in 1585, subsequently confirmed by Clement III in 1600, authorizing the Jesuits alone to work in Japan, all might have gone well. It was the intemperate and tactless zeal of the Dominicans and Franciscans—especially the latter—which so incensed Hideyoshi, and generally undid the efforts of the mission as a whole.

It is not proposed to discuss here the reintroduction of Christianity into Japan after the restoration of 1863, but there is one incident which must be mentioned.

Some members of the French *Missions Étrangères* had arrived in 1860 at Nagasaki. The memories of the old days were still sufficient for them to be regarded with the gravest suspicion; moreover, they were in considerable danger from assassination. In spite of this intensely antagonistic atmosphere, they went ahead with their plans and built a church. They had hoped that there might be some remains of the old Faith still existing somewhere, but all their efforts to discover them ended in failure. The only people who came to their church were sightseers and police spies.

On March 17th, 1865, five years of seemingly hopeless labours had elapsed. Not a single convert had been gained. On that day one of the priests opened the church to the usual crowd, and then knelt down to pray. Suddenly he heard a whisper. There were three women kneeling close beside him. He caught the words: "The hearts of all of us here do not differ from your own." Amazed

and delighted, he made enquiries. The women had come from the village of Urakami, near Nagasaki, the inhabitants of which were found to be secret Christians. For some two hundred and thirty years they had had no priests, no sacraments, no instruction and no encouragement. Their immunity from arrest, imprisonment, torture and the grimmest of deaths was at the mercy of the innocent babbling of a child ! Yet through these centuries they had remained unscathed, undiscovered ; and not only they, for eventually some twenty other Christian communities were found, numbering in all about fifty thousand souls. The villagers of Urakami "had a clear knowledge of God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary ; they observed Sunday and kept Christmas and Lent, recited certain prayers at daily family worship, possessed a Christian manual and had all received lay baptism with the Latin formula at the hands of an official baptizer whose office was apparently in this case hereditary" (Moule).¹

In view of the above almost incredible fact it is a little difficult to subscribe to the statement quoted at the opening of this chapter—that "Christianity is one foreign influence that did not leave an imprint on Japanese life and thought".

¹ *The Spirit of Japan.*

IX

THE SECOND SHINTO IMPACT AND THE RESTORATION

THAT THE House of Tokugawa should prepare the way for its own downfall is nothing to be surprised at. But the actual cause which led to that downfall was somewhat unusual. Of course, luxury and debaucheries weakened its authority, but the real reason was something far more fundamental and irresistible.

Ieyasu, the founder of the line, had been a great scholar, a patron of learning and a collector of literary works. On his death in 1616, he divided his vast collection, his Japanese books going to his eighth son, the Prince of Owari, and his Chinese collection to another son, the Prince of Kishu.

This love of learning was inherited, and among the great Shogun's descendants shone out particularly in the case of one of his grandsons—Mitsukuni, the Prince of Mito (1622–1700).

His example in encouraging scholarship and research into Japanese, as distinct from Chinese history, customs and traditions, led other great lords to do likewise, and thus there came gradually into existence a new school of learning, the members of which devoted themselves to the study of Japanese classics, at the expense of Chinese literature. The result of this revival was certainly not foreseen. As the history of the early days came to be examined, there was laid bare that process by which foreign—i.e. Chinese—literary influences had so overlaid and undermined native learning as practically to crush it out of existence. The same process had resulted in the religion of the ancestral gods being so swamped by the foreign creed as to be reduced “almost to the state of a superstition”. An indignant scholar is said to have exclaimed: “The Shinto gods have become the servants of the Buddhas!”

But these very Shinto gods were the ancestors of Japan's Emperors, of her princes, of the very nation!

The foreign influence that had degraded the gods had degraded the Imperial House itself! Was it not a fact that this "foreignism" had resulted in the Emperor being reduced to a mere puppet in the hands of a dictator, be this dictator Regent or Taikun or Shogun? The Shogun was nothing more than a usurper. The Shogun must go!

It must not be imagined that this development of thought was a sudden growth. It was a matter of more than a hundred years, and would quite possibly have had no other effect than to give rise to a new school of philosophy, had not changes in the political arena made it a perfect instrument ready to the hands of the chief actors.

The Tokugawa Shogunate reached its highest and most brilliant period of culture in the eighteenth century. The Shogun was supreme. The country was under complete control; peace and order reigned throughout the land. But as the people settled down to a life of regularity and security, so more and more, though gradually, did they chafe against the rigidity of the environment in which they found themselves encased. This was particularly so in the intellectual life of the nation. The works of the great scholars referred to above began to reach the ears of the people at large. This came about initially through the writings of three outstanding men—Mabuchi (1697–1769), Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), and Hirata Atsutane (1776–1893). It was Hirata who particularly emphasized the divine character of the Japanese people, insisting especially on the heavenly origin of the Imperial House in general and of the Emperor in particular. This was to play a large part in the coming Restoration, and was to become the apex of all propaganda from 1930 onwards.

Such ideas gradually spread, and gave rise to an interesting development—the appearance of popular religious teachers, whose adherents to-day comprise the Shinto sects. "These teachers and their followers . . . represented the crude, but comparatively pure, religious spirit buried in the heart of the people; their religion had remained beneath the surface during the reign of perfect stability. . . . Now when the Tokugawa regime began to give way to various agitations, those popular religions proceeded to appear in public and finally to achieve an independent growth" (Anesaki).

For the Tokugawa control was slowly crumbling, and it is surely

significant that the first popular symptom of that process was an awakening of spiritual aspirations among the people.

It was hardly to be expected that the amazingly efficient social order built up and controlled by the Tokugawa family should be accepted with whole-hearted enthusiasm by the great and hitherto almost independent Daimyo. There was, on the contrary, considerable chafing and discontent under the Shogun's arbitrary and most authoritative government; and of this he was perfectly well aware. This was particularly the case in the south, the area ruled by the great Daimyo of Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa and Hizen, who had constantly been seeking the opportunity to rid themselves of the galling controls of the Bakufu, under which they had for so long writhed.

The circumstances which led to the final overthrow of the Shogun were so various and complicated that it is by no means easy to unravel them in such a way as to give a brief comprehensive view of the elements and forces which were to bring about the end of the Feudal regime and the restoration of the monarchy.

There was, first of all, a general unrest and discontent throughout the country, due mainly to the restraint on individual freedom, and the intellectual and spiritual restrictions imposed by the rigidities of Confucian-Shinto-Buddhist ethics and communal controls. As a result, the writings of men like Hirata were eagerly accepted and spread, and a glad welcome was given to the various religious teachings of wandering preachers, who emphasized spiritual freedom and the equality of all in the sight of God.

Then there was the economic distress, due to three main causes, the first of which was the gradual impoverishment of the Government administration. The anti-foreign legislation with the resulting isolation of Japan, had deprived the Government of the benefits accruing from foreign trade. The desperate need for money had brought the merchant class into ever closer relations with the ruling class, enabling the former to acquire more and more power, but not to the enrichment of the State. The main burden—for money had to be procured—fell as usual on the peasants, who, as the administration grew weaker, demonstrated their rising discontent in rice riots and similar disturbances.

Of all these different currents of feeling the southern lords were well aware, as also of the fact that Satsuma and Choshu, in particular, had become the focus of the general discontent. Their plans were well laid, and they only awaited a suitable opportunity to destroy the Shogunate and restore the Monarchy to its rightful position.

This opportunity arose with the coming of "the black ships" of Commodore Perry in 1853.

The Government of the U.S.A. had for some time been conscious of the immense advantages that could be gained by trade with China. In the initial stages of developing this trade, many American ships had been wrecked on the Japanese coast and their crews murdered or grossly maltreated. The Perry expedition was designed to force Japan to open her doors to normal, international commercial relations, and to ensure free and unmolested passage for shipping to and from the China ports.

On his arriving off Shimonoseki and formulating his request, Perry met with a curt refusal. He then bombarded the port, by which show of force he succeeded in obtaining an interview with the Shogun, who was compelled to accede to his demands.

Here at last was the opportunity for which the malcontents had so long been waiting. To start with, the making of treaties with other Powers was peculiarly the prerogative of the Emperor. For the Shogun to sign a treaty without his authority was gross usurpation of the Imperial role. Moreover, the full title of the head of the Bakufu was *Sei-i Dai-shogun*, which means "Generalissimo for expelling foreign barbarians"; and here was the Shogun himself welcoming these same barbarians! Open attacks were made against the Bakufu. "Political and social discontent against the existing regime, enthusiasm assured by the propagation of nationalist ethics, the semi-religious reverence towards the Imperial Throne, the hereditary hatred and dread of foreigners implanted by the alleged evils of Kirishitan missions—all these forces converged in vehement attacks on the Government" (Anesaki).

There then originated the slogan which was enthusiastically revived in the years of the War: *Son-ō Jō-i*—"Adore the Throne and Expel the Barbarians".

Largely as a result of the fanaticism that had been aroused, one of the southern fiefs started bombarding foreign ships standing in the ports. The vigorous reply to this made the Daimyo realize that, in a trial by force, they were hopelessly inferior. The slogan was changed to *Son-ō Tō-baku*—i.e. "Adore the Throne, Away with the Shogunate".

It has already been pointed out how the feudal system, as organized and controlled by the Tokugawa Shogunate, precluded, by insistence on loyalty to the lord, that larger loyalty which is patriotism in its modern sense. This limited conception of loyalty had been used by the Shoguns as a political instrument of considerable value. But now with the coming of the Perry expedition the whole situation was radically changed. The Shogun realized full well that his centralized military government, the Bakufu, was tottering; its authority was becoming ever less respected, its administration ever more the object of loathing and contempt.

With the weakening of the central control, the Daimyo in general were becoming restless and aggressive. Should they get out of control, the land would again be torn by civil strife.

This supreme danger required that the social units should be fused into one coherent mass, capable of uniform action. In other words, the clan groupings must be permanently dissolved and all authority actually and in fact be centred in the one representative of the national religion. The feudal duty of loyalty and obedience to the territorial lord must be replaced by a new conception—the duty of loyalty and obedience to the Emperor. "This religion of loyalty, evolved through over a thousand years of the Ancestral Cult, modified by Confucian and Buddhist ethical impacts, and intensified through centuries of civil warfare—could not be done away with. Indeed it had become so integral a part of the Japanese character that this would have been an impossibility. But it could be diverted and transformed; it could, if properly directed and utilized, prove itself to be a national heritage of incalculable worth" (L. Hearn).¹

In the meanwhile, those Daimyo who had had the unpleasant experience of succumbing to Western superiority in armaments, had taken the lesson to heart. They were men of intense pride, having

¹ *Japan, An Interpretation.*

a passionate love for their country and a fanatical devotion to its Emperor.

Suddenly there appeared foreign ships from another nation, the leader of which calmly ordered them to change their laws and methods of government. They naturally refused, regarding his action, quite reasonably, as intolerable interference in their internal affairs. Whereupon their ships were sunk, their towns bombarded, their countrymen slain. To unwarrantable interference was added open aggression. They would emphatically never forget this. The time would one day come when the score would be made even.

Such was the general tone of reasoning which led to the political changes which now followed with amazing rapidity. In 1867 the Shogun resigned and gave back his title and power to the source from which he had received it—the Throne. In 1868 the Emperor, then a boy of seventeen, was brought out of his seclusion and at long last was recognized as the only ruler of the land, *de jure* and *de facto*. Following the Shogun's example, the Daimyo by one means or another were induced to render back to the Emperor their fiefs and authority in their entirety. The national slogan was changed once more, becoming *Kaikoku shinshu*—"Open the Country and Achieve Progress". The restoration of the Emperor was a *fait accompli*.

The immediate effects of this great change on the life of the people in general were less than might be imagined. At first things went on very much as usual, and it was only gradually that the tremendous difference that it was to make was brought home to them. This was mainly through two Bills—the Conscription Act of 1872-3, and the Education Bill of the same years.

To get a general picture of the events leading up to the former Bill it is necessary to go back a few years to the time when the Bakufu was beginning to realize that unless it could devise some means of restoring its control over the Daimyate, its days were numbered. Two alternatives presented themselves. The peasants had become ever more restless, and their demands for relief were gaining both in force and frequency. The Government found itself on the horns of a dilemma. It remembered the strength of the

Nohei in the past, the menace of which had resulted in Hideyoshi's "Sword Hunt".

Should the Bakufu, by suitable agrarian reforms, temporarily pacify the peasantry, and then organize and use an official Nohei system against the restless and muttering clans? To take such a step would involve the abandonment of the whole clan system of feudalism, and inevitably undermine that conception of loyalty which held the community together. In circumstances where basic moral ideals are concerned, it is impossible to say "thus far and no farther".

On the other hand, would it be wiser for the Government to reject all peasant demands and, relying on its strength, risk a rising of the clans? It decided on the latter course, and thereby hastened its own inevitable downfall.

The clan leaders, in the meantime, were perfectly well aware of what was going on at the Court of the Shogun. When they realized that the Government was considering the idea of enlisting an organized peasant force against themselves, their indignation reached its height. It was an act of gross treason to the great Samurai class of which all were members; well, if the Shogun played with such an idea, why should they not take a leaf out of his book?

Of all the anti-Bakufu clans of the south, it was that of the Choshu that was the most hostile. Realizing that a showdown by force of arms must very soon take place, the Daimyo of the clan, Mori Motomori, put the reorganization of his troops into the hands of a young Samurai, Takasugi Shinsako. The new commander insisted on a free hand, which was given him, for, emphasizing the urgent necessity of new blood and new methods, he recruited peasant and artisan alike, regardless of their positions in the social scale. These recruits he formed into divisions, to which were given the name *Kiheitai* or "surprise troops"; he further insisted on their being trained with Western weapons. By 1863 the *Kiheitai* had proved their worth by defeating the Bakufu troops over and over again, though they were invariably greatly outnumbered.

Takasugi's second-in-command and eventual successor was a certain Omura Masahiro, who had perhaps the best all-round brain in the country. He knew both Dutch and English; was widely read

in Western science, including medicine, and had delved deep into economics and other foreign studies: it was indeed his intimate acquaintance with foreign strategy that led to the final overthrow of the Bakufu. He was indeed a remarkable character by any standard, and is rightly regarded as the founder of the Japanese Army.

Now this utilization of peasant forces, started by Takasugi and developed by Omura, was copied by other "rebel" clans. The fact that the risings were against the Government led the peasantry to believe that the aspirations of the clan leaders were the same as their own. Accordingly they rushed to volunteer, and so the Kiheitai organization became a sort of peasant revolt against the Bakufu, but controlled from above. Time was to show how bitterly the unfortunate peasants had deceived themselves.

When, in 1868, the young Emperor Mutsuhito was brought out of his seclusion and restored to his rightful position on the throne, Omura Masahiro was appointed his first War Minister, and the Kiheitai became the core of the Imperial forces in the final victorious campaign against the Bakufu.

Omura was determined to build up a strong national army, but the knowledge he had acquired through foreign books, as well as his own observation, showed him that, before such a force could be organized, certain sweeping social reforms would first have to be undertaken. Obviously for an Army to be truly national in character, it must include men from all ranks of life. There could no longer be a Samurai class with its special rights and privileges. That must be done away with. In 1869 the first steps were taken to bring this about—and Omura was promptly murdered.

The first Conscription Act was passed in 1872–3. In putting this measure through, the leaders in the Government hoped to control conditions in the country. Though the hated Bakufu had been finally crushed, and the Emperor restored to his rightful position, there were still some elderly conservative clan lords supported by disgruntled Samurai and *Ronin*¹ who might—and in one or two cases actually did—organize resistance to the Central Power. The

¹ *Ronin* — "wave men", i.e. Samurai not in the service of any particular Lord and so unemployed.

Satsuma rebellion, led by the famous Saigo Takamori, was the most dangerous of these risings.

Saigo represented the pro-feudal longings of the Samurai class which, as an independent body of privileged warriors, felt itself doomed. But it was the Conscription Law which was the supreme and final cause of the rising, "because it would eventually result in the disarming of all Samurai".¹ At the same time, the plebeian and peasant recruits of the Government's new conscript army, which had developed from the Kiheitai, realized that they were being used to overcome that Samurai class which had oppressed them for so long and so grievously, and fought with tremendous enthusiasm. Though raw and inexperienced, they fought also victoriously. For the common people were buoyed up by hopes that the elimination of the high feudal caste would result in the granting of a modicum of freedom to themselves.

But in the hands of the Government the Conscription Law became a two-edged weapon. On the one hand it enabled authority, by garrisoning strategic centres about the country, to suppress any rising of any kind—feudal or anti-feudal. On the other hand—and this was far the more important—it involved the gathering together of impressionable, irresponsible young peasants and artisans, and teaching them for the first time the rudiments of discipline. Segregated as they were from discontented villages, receiving—the majority for the first time—some form of education in a barracks atmosphere, permitted to read only "safe" books, their attention was turned away from subjects likely to prove embarrassing to the Government, and diverted to such improving themes as the paternalism of the Government, the uniqueness of Japan, its inevitable expansion and so forth.

After his assassination Omura Masahiro was succeeded by one who may be regarded as Japan's evil genius—Field Marshal Yamagata. Indeed it is nothing less than a tragedy that at so vital a period in Japan's history the moulding of her future should fall into the hands of a man so strong, so selfish, so reactionary and so unscrupulous.

It must be remembered that the passing of these Conscription Acts occurred long before the granting of a Constitution, or the

¹ Mounsey, *The Satsuma Rebellion*.

existence of any representative institution. There were, therefore, no means whatever by which the peasant population, who were most affected, could make their voice heard. Moreover, the application of the Conscription Law was grossly inequitable. Specially resented was the clause permitting those called up to purchase exemption for a sum far in excess of what the unfortunate land worker could possibly afford.

It is therefore not surprising that the enforcement of the Act caused popular rioting in many parts of the country. It is even recorded that, in the first ten years of the new regime—i.e. 1868–78—there were no fewer than a hundred and eighty-five peasant revolts.

In view of its origin, it was natural that most of the high posts in the rapidly growing Imperial Army should be held by members of the Choshu clan; the remainder were in the hands of noble clan families who had proved their loyalty to the Throne at the Restoration. So the unfortunate peasant now found in military service precisely the same overlords against whose oppression and privileges he had been struggling for so many centuries. But there was now an additional burden for him to bear. It has already been shown how, during the latter years of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the relationship between the Akindo—the merchant class—and the Samurai was becoming closer and more intimate. Now, with the opening up of the country, the former, especially the larger banking and financial groups, were coming more and more into favour, and thus wielding increased influence and power. So at home the peasant found that he had but exchanged a privileged feudal class for a privileged moneyed class.

Conscription in Japan, therefore, was autocratic in establishment, and counter-revolutionary in design and effect. It was the deliberate plan of those leaders who developed it, to use it both as a means of blocking the aspirations of a downtrodden and exploited people, whether peasants or townsmen, and as a channel whereby the old doctrines of privilege and obedience might be spread throughout the land. It is surely the grimmest irony that in these latter years we have been witnessing the descendants of those very people who had hoped and fought so hard for freedom, now bound in body and mind, and in the name of freedom, acting as agents to rivet shackles on others !

X

THE EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

IN ONE respect, the history of education in Japan differs from that of all other countries. Right through the centuries, from its most rudimentary stages up to its final form as a modern and excellently organized system, Japanese education has retained one characteristic: whenever it has been sponsored by the Government, it has always been organized with a specific political end in view.

In the true sense of the word, there was almost no education until the restoration of the Emperor in 1868. There were indeed schools, colleges and even a University, but, as we shall see, the curricula could hardly be described as educative.

In the early years of the clans—each of which was formed by a group of families under the headship of a chief—there is found the usual primitive custom of division of labour, with each unit perpetuating the family occupation. Hence there developed a certain form of education for the children of the various clans, though of course there was no such organization as might be termed a school. It was merely such instruction as would provide suitable training along the line of the various occupations.

At the beginning of the seventh century, active steps were taken to propagate Buddhism. This was due to the enthusiasm of Prince Shotoku, the Regent, who, in his desire to spread the faith, caused the first real school to be established. True, it was attached to a temple and was designed only for the instruction of a native clergy; but it did set a precedent which led to the establishing of other schools and, fifty years later, to the foundation of the first University at Nara (c. 670–700) for the sons of the nobility.

During the eighth and ninth centuries private schools were started in Kyoto—by this time the capital—which were founded by the great Court families and reserved for the education of their members

and chief retainers. Also it is interesting to note that during this period the first public library appeared, while students—of course, of the upper class only—were being regularly sent to China, and on their return were given some lucrative employment under the Government.

But by the end of the ninth century this intellectual activity had reached its height and began to decline—a process which was to continue throughout the next two hundred years. This was mainly due to the social changes that were taking place, caused by the increasing power of the great families, the gradual crystallization of the feudal system, and the long series of inter-clan feuds, which culminated in the Taira-Minamoto war and the beginning of the Shogunate.

During this period the country was thrown into utter confusion. Scholarship came to be of no account when compared with the cultivation of martial qualities. The land was laid waste, and anything like an educational system—insignificant though it had been—came to an end.

During this dark period, the only power left to preserve the tradition of learning and scholarship was the Buddhist priesthood. The general condition of Japanese education at that time is well summed up by Professor Lombard: "Education had not ceased to exist, but it flourished only in the retirement of temples and under the fostering care of those who escaped the enervating luxury of the Court on the one hand, and the rude might of unorganized soldiery on the other. The slender thread of literary culture was held unbroken by Buddhist priests who made their abiding place a school, and gathered with careful keeping books that would otherwise have been lost."¹

Such was the condition of affairs when the first of the great trio, Nobunaga, came on the scene. So much occupied was he in quelling disorder that he could do little to forward the arts of peace. But he promoted learning and the crafts, so far as was possible, and through his encouragement of the Christian mission, European learning, and surgery in particular, were introduced into Japan.

His successor, Hideyoshi, though contributing very little to the

¹ *Pre-Meiji Education.*

cause of education itself, nevertheless provided that atmosphere of peace and order in which it might once more gather strength. One of the results of this was the appearance among the feudal lords of real lovers of learning, who later added much lustre to the court of the Tokugawa Shoguns.

We have already commented on the enthusiasm shown by Ieyasu Tokugawa for learning and scholarship, and, in view of the fact that he regarded a knowledge of literature as being essential to those of Samurai rank, it might have been expected that he would give some encouragement to a more general educational policy.

But he and his immediate successors were too much occupied in the work of consolidation to do very much in that direction, and it was not until the rule of the fifth Shogun, Tsunayoshi, that a real impulse to learning was given. The motive was certainly political, for it was on the study of Chinese literature that he laid most stress; for this purpose he established schools and engaged many Confucian scholars. The Confucian ethic of subordination, obedience and loyalty to authority was thus disseminated, and the control of the Bakufu was thereby strengthened and solidified.

The most brilliant years of the Tokugawa Shogunate, known as the *Kyohu* Period, began in 1716 under the Shogun Yoshimura. He removed the embargo on Western Arts and Sciences, and encouraged the spread of education among the common people, a policy which was further fostered by his successor, Yoshimune. Private schools began to function wherever there was a sufficient population to support them, and as they were almost invariably run by the Buddhists in connection with the local temple, they were called *Terakoya*.¹

Though the curriculum included elementary instruction in the three "Rs", yet moral teaching formed the most important part; not only were special periods allotted to it, but moral maxims were largely used in reading and writing exercises.

The coming of the "black ships" with Commodore Perry had tremendous repercussions on every part of the Japanese social organism, and it was inevitable that the tender plant of popular education should be the first to be adversely affected. But the

¹ *Tera*—a temple—temple schools.

Shogun's government, before its final downfall, had already realized that much was to be learnt from the West, and had accordingly established a kind of academy where the foreign languages of Dutch, English, German, French and Russian were taught, even to the common people. This Academy, opened in 1857, is important as being the germ from which grew the present Imperial University of Tokyo.

Japan was fortunate in the character and abilities of the men then holding the key positions of political responsibility—Yamagata alone excepted. The policies they adopted were carefully considered and courageously applied. Fundamental to their success was the revival of the old belief in the divinity of the Emperor.

The primary concept to be instilled into the minds of the people, and especially to be impressed upon the youthful generation, was that of absolute, unquestioning obedience and loyalty to their sacred ruler. To achieve this an educational organization was imperative.

On March 14th, 1868, the Emperor offered the so-called "Charter Oath of Five Principles" before the sanctuary in the Imperial Palace. The fifth principle declares: "Wisdom and ability should be sought after in all quarters of the world for the purpose of firmly establishing the foundations of the Empire."

In September 1871 the Department of Education—*Monbusho*—was established, and just a year later the first Education Code was issued. It was accompanied by a preamble, the essence of which is contained in the following section:

"It is intended that henceforth universally (without any distinction of class or sex) in a village there shall be no house without learning, and in a house no individual without learning. Fathers or elder brothers must take note of this intention, and bringing up their children or younger brothers with warm feeling of love, must not fail to let them acquire learning. . . . It shall be regarded as a neglect of duty on the part of fathers or elder brothers should they fail to send young children to elementary schools without distinction of sex."

Before the Code was promulgated, extensive investigations had been made of the educational methods in occidental countries.

Uniformity and centralization of authority were the two essential characteristics sought for, and these were found in the French system, which was thereupon adopted.

When, however, it came to the practical working out of that system, the whole scheme was found to be far too elaborate. So in September 1879 a new Code was promulgated, which continued in operation till 1886. From that date, any fundamental changes found to be necessary have been effected by Imperial Ordinance.

In October 1890 there was issued the famous Imperial Rescript on Education which has certainly had more influence on the Japanese people than any single document in her history. It is indeed regarded by them almost in the same light as the Mosaic Law by the Hebrews. Its maxims have been made the basis of innumerable books and commentaries. It provides the perfect model on which the Japanese character is to be moulded. It was as follows:

“Know Ye Our Subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects, ever united in Loyalty and Filial Piety, have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our Education. Ye, Our Subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good, and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the Laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with Heaven and Earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects but ye shall render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

“The thirtieth day of the tenth month of the twenty-third year of Meiji.” *October 30th*, 1890.

A copy of the Rescript is given to every school throughout the Empire, as also a portrait of the reigning Emperor.

On October 30th of every year, as well as on certain other occasions, the document is read before the assembled school or college. It is always read by the Principal in person amid a display of the greatest possible ceremonial reverence. So sacred is its every word that a mistake in reading it—be it a mere slip of the tongue—is regarded almost as *lèse-majesté*, and is normally followed by the proffered resignation of the reader.

The portrait is usually kept in a special fireproof shed. Pupils are always instructed that, in case of any natural disaster, such as earthquake, fire or typhoon, it must be rescued before all else. The effect of such regulations on young minds cannot well be over-estimated.

It was not until Viscount Mori became Education Minister (1885–9), that the system really got into its stride. The general organization and control then brought into being existed, with minor modifications, up to 1941.

To give any detailed account of the pre-war organization of Japanese education is both impracticable and unnecessary.¹ It is sufficient to say that as a machine designed for a certain purpose, it was extraordinarily efficient and extremely thorough. The elementary stage for children from five or six years to thirteen or fourteen was compulsory throughout the land. This resulted in Japan being able to claim for her people a literacy of ninety-seven per cent. What is striking is the degree of centralization that the system achieved.

From elementary school to University, no teacher, lecturer or professor could officiate without holding a licence from the Department of Education. Neither could any book of any kind whatsoever be used without the Government's sign manual on the title page. Thus the authorities had complete control, not only of what was taught but also of the way it was taught.

Above the elementary stage all further grades were voluntary. They comprised middle school (ages fourteen to eighteen), high school (eighteen to twenty), and University (twenty to twenty-four).

¹ Under the Allied Occupation the whole system has been completely reorganized and decentralized.

There were also Technical Schools of every kind, while in the University grade there were certain colleges specializing in one particular course, such as Engineering, Medicine, Music and so forth.

In view of the social position occupied by women in feudal days, it is only to be expected that the facilities for their education in pre-war Japan were not on a level with those provided for males. Thus, after elementary school, girls could proceed to high school, but though the title sounds grandiloquent, in actual fact the standard of the curriculum was lower than that for the boys' middle school.

There were a few Women's colleges of University standard founded by private enterprise and also some founded by Christian missions, though, of course, all these were under Government control. Moreover, some of the men's Universities were willing to admit women students. But in general their education was neglected.

There can be no manner of doubt, however, that, among the educated public generally, the need for greater educational opportunities for women is becoming more and more recognized. It is impossible to over-estimate the part they can play, if given such opportunities, in the future reconstruction of Japan.

Great and detailed attention was given to the normal schools—an attention which even included supervision over the private lives of the students. This showed how meticulously the authorities watched over the "thought campaign" that was their policy.

It was natural that during the years immediately preceding the War—i.e. from 1930 onwards—the educational machine should be increasingly geared to the chauvinistic and reactionary doctrines of the militarists. But the extent to which this policy was carried out is certainly not realized, nor indeed does it sound credible. It was far more thorough than in Nazi Germany.

Though even in the primary school little lads of nine and ten would undergo such charming "educational" exercises as "Bayonet attacks for Babies", it was not until they reached middle school that the students first underwent organized military training. The War Department provided officer Instructors, and the training, which

occupied five hours a week, was of a regular and serious nature. In addition to the five hours' practical training, the officers delivered lectures on such subjects as were most likely to stimulate martial ardour. Three days in each term were given to field days out in the country, where the students lived in exactly the same manner as troops on active service. Once a year large field exercises were conducted over ten days. These were for senior students only. Several schools united and joined up with units of the regular Army. It was in the middle school also that the student made his first acquaintance with a foreign language, which in seven cases out of ten was English.

Since the beginning of the strong nationalist revival about 1928, the Ministry, in consultation with Army authority, considered it imperative to provide educational (perhaps "indoctrinational" would be the correct term) opportunities for the very large class of youths and girls who, on leaving elementary schools, had to go out into the world and engage in trade, industry or agriculture. Accordingly the *Seinengakko* or Youth Schools were started; they were to be organized as part of the activities of the *Seinendan*, or Young Men's Association. This *Seinendan* was a development of the Young Men's Clubs of feudal days. It was organized into city, town and village groups. The headquarters were in Tokyo, and frequent National Conventions were held, in which the "thoughts" policy of the Association was determined. In 1937 there were said to be fifteen thousand four hundred and sixty-nine groups in the Association, with a membership of two million, five hundred thousand young men.

Running parallel to the *Seinengakko* was the *Seinen Gunren Gakko*, or Youth Training Schools. These were subsidized by the Army, and provided a pre-conscriptional military training for the same type of youth.

The most sinister of the youth societies, however, was that formed by Lieutenant-General Hashimoto Kingoro,¹ the *Nippon Seinenkai*, or the Japan Youth Federation. The chief tenets of the Federation were said to include assassination of obstructionists, no contact

¹ He is now on trial with others of the leading Japanese militarists before the Allied Tribunal in Tokyo (Sept. 1947).

with foreigners, abolition of all political parties, dictatorship, destruction of Britain and the U.S.A., and Japanese world conquest.

Perhaps no other association had such an effect on the mind of Japan's youth and boyhood. This may be gathered from the size of its membership, which, by 1940, was said to have reached no less than five million.

It was said earlier that the Japanese educational system was brought into being for certain specific purposes. It was designed as an instrument of national policy. By its means the people were to be welded into one vast unit, a mass united round the central core of the Throne, all individuals trained to think alike and act alike. A certain type of citizen was to be turned out. The desired pattern once determined by the Central Government, the educational machine was set to work to turn out that pattern. Well did it do so !

The chief instrument used to accomplish this result was the subject called "morals", known as *Shushin* in elementary and secondary education, and *Kokumin dotoku* in the higher grades. Nominally two hours a week were devoted to it, and this in schools and colleges of every grade. Actually its flavour permeated every subject. It must be understood that "morals" to Japanese authority are entirely divorced from religion, the teaching of which is forbidden in all schools. But this regulation did not affect the teaching of State Shinto, which had officially been declared as being above all religion and thus exempt. In short, the teaching of morals was not concerned with the question of developing good men and women, but with *developing good Japanese*. This was to be done by inculcating the "Japanese Spirit", *Yamato Damashii* or *Seishin*. So far as Japanese schools were concerned, the basis on which the whole science of morals rested was the Imperial Rescript on Education. An examination of the text reveals that two virtues are essentially emphasized as having always been characteristic of the Japanese; namely, Loyalty and Filial Piety; and that, as a whole, the rest of the document comprises a succession of pious platitudes, the very vagueness of which lends itself to an infinitude of interpretations. It has been shown how throughout the feudal period "the doctrine of *chu* or

loyalty exercised a profound and lasting influence on Japanese thought; it was the principle of all conduct" (Spinks).

But the claims it made on the man professing it were so all-embracing that he was justified in committing any act, however base and treacherous, if by so doing he could advance the cause of his Lord. This loyalty, with all its implications of unquestioning, slavish obedience to authority, was henceforth to be transferred to the person of the Emperor and his representatives as they descended the social scale, down to the very headman of the village. Along this path of utter obedience must the Japanese student tread. He must accept unquestioningly and with his whole being any dogma put before him by authority; his whole training was designed to make him accept it enthusiastically.

In 1938 General Araki,¹ a reactionary fanatic, became Minister of Education, and from that time the Army definitely and openly took over the supervision and training of the nation's youth. The previous five years had been notable for the campaign against "dangerous thoughts". This term was used not, as is generally supposed, in regard to Communist theorising only, but to any kind of intellectual activity which tended to the slightest deviation from the official path along which all must walk. It was indeed a grim period from one point of view; from another perhaps the brightest of pre-war Japan. The spirit of free enquiry blew like a breeze through the high schools and Universities, and beyond them. How many were stirred by it we do not know, but we do know that the *Japan Times* of August 15th, 1936, reported that between 1933 and 1936 fifty-nine thousand and thirteen persons were arrested on the charge of preaching, carrying into practice, or merely harbouring "dangerous thoughts". Reports that the police tortured the majority into pleading guilty are only too well authenticated. Some died under their sufferings. Many of the victims, knowing their fate if caught, deliberately took the risk of working for a better state of things; it is impossible to overrate their courage, and their names form perhaps Japan's greatest, though unrecognized, roll of honour. It is a tremendously hopeful sign for future days.

¹ Also on trial.

Immediately after Araki's appointment, official Thought Supervisors and Thought Inspection Commissions were appointed to visit all educational establishments, to encourage "the cultivation of the nationalist character and the exalting of the Japanese spirit so that students might gain a full understanding and recognition of the time-honoured learning and culture peculiar to the country" (Educational Circular).

In 1936 the Japanese Learning Promotion Committee was formed, which aimed at "the creation and development of the learning and culture peculiar to Japan". One notes the repetition of the word "peculiar".

Other committees with the same main object of regimenting the youthful, and incidentally the parental mind, were formed, among them being that for "The Promotion of Pupils' and Students' Welfare". This provided funds for poor students to relieve them of financial worries, and at the same time to fill them with gratitude to a paternal Government. In practice, it ensured that no assisted student could possibly break away from the tentacles of reaction, for the smallest step off the "true thought path" would involve the penalizing of his family by the stopping of supplies.

Under Araki's aegis, the whole of the educational machine was welded to the Army's organization for indoctrinating the people of the country. This gave the Military a rigidly supervised system and a network of "Thought Control" centres which had already trained the young never to indulge in independent thought; to accept and not to question. To attain their object, the two Departments of Education and War brought into action every method of modern propaganda. Pamphlets, sometimes a million to one issue, rolled from the Army presses. These were distributed not only in schools and colleges, but through every village and hamlet in the land. The object of these pamphlets was not so much to increase the "Japanese Spirit", for that was already being attended to most efficiently, but definitely to arouse and encourage the desire for war.

Lectures were widely organized. Propaganda film shows toured the country in motor vans, carrying all the necessary apparatus.

Not a village was left untouched, unaffected. Schools were provided with specially made records of speeches by the country's leaders—speeches of the most Jingoistic type, of course. Principals of primary and secondary schools were ordered to organize frequent trips to local shrines, in addition to the normal, compulsory annual pilgrimages to the shrines of Ise, Yasukuni and Meiji. When visiting the latter in Tokyo, all had to go in procession to the plaza before the Imperial Palace and make their obeisance. In country districts, the Commanding Officer of the local barracks issued invitations to the surrounding schools; everything possible was done to impress the children with the happy life led by the soldiers, under the kindly care of their officers.

The Japanese people are, as we know, strikingly gregarious; they delight in forming themselves into groups and societies. In the work of indoctrinating youth, the activities of two societies were outstandingly influential. They were the Ex-Service Men's Association, or *Teikoku Zaigo Gunji Kai*, for young men and boys; and the Women's Society for National Defence—*Dai Nippon Kokubo Fujin Kai*—for young women and girls. The former was especially valuable to the authorities. Even the smallest village boasted a unit. Its members always took the lead in organizing patriotic festivals, lecturing schoolchildren on loyalty, etc., guiding the boy scouts, drilling the students of the Seinengakko, and, above all, acting as the outposts of the Army in supervising the "thought atmosphere" of every house in their particular neighbourhood.

Within the schools themselves, especially those of higher grade, the Army became more and more aggressive, much to the resentment of many of the school authorities. Spies were placed in every class, who were encouraged to keep their eyes and ears open, even in regard to members of the staff, as well as to their fellow students. The usual lecturer on Morals was frequently removed in favour of a young Army officer, the former professor being compelled to sit among his pupils and learn the correct way of teaching!

All college libraries were closely scrutinized for the merest hint of "un-Japanese thought". Hundreds of volumes, hitherto considered harmless, were removed, and their places taken by others

recommended by the Army or specially purchased by the college authorities at the command of the Ministry of Education.

In the field of sport anything savouring of "Individualism" was to be crushed. This was considered to be the most insidious heresy with which the Japanese had been infected by the West.

Spectators of the University League Matches at the Meiji Stadium—for some games they might number thirty or forty thousand—were forbidden to shout or cheer. The only sign of approval permitted was a modest clapping! All such games began and ended by the teams lining up, and all, spectators included, solemnly bowing towards the Imperial Palace.

When we calmly examine the whole organization for youth indoctrination designed and carried out by the Education Department in conjunction with the War Department, we can see how scientific and thorough it was. It was as though every moment of every day had been taken into account for every type of young man or boy, for every variety of occupation, be it trade or factory, agriculture or leisure activities, in order that the Emperor cult, with all that it implied, should permeate any atmosphere by which young Japan might be surrounded.

It might well be thought that the youth against whom all these tremendous efforts were directed must have been an incipient rebel, thoroughly impregnated with all the horrors of democracy. On the contrary, he was, as a rule, a quiet, well-behaved and obedient soul.

It may perhaps help us to appreciate the power of all these influences on the Japanese boy and girl if we try to imagine their effect on British or American children, even allowing them their own background of national tradition and normal home atmosphere. How would they react if, from the age of six to that of twenty-three, they were exposed to a system of indoctrination similar to that of the Japanese? And yet, in spite of their thousand-year-old national tradition of absolute submission and obedience to authority as part of the very air they have breathed from birth, we are given the figure of fifty-nine thousand young Japanese—how many more undiscovered we know not—who overcame this tremendous incubus, who resisted it and were glad to fight against it, knowing well that

torture and possible death might be the result. The majority of these were by no means Communist; they were urged on by the craving for intellectual and spiritual freedom, for which they were willing to give their young lives, as indeed so many did.

This throws a brilliant light on the future, for it shows the strength of will that underlies the intense emotionalism of the Japanese, when they are inspired by an ideal which captures and holds their imagination. It is towards the *natural* development of such an ideal that the new educational policy of Japan must tend.

PART II

FOREWORD

THE FIRST part of this book has been designed to show the chief forces that, in the course of their history, have impacted on the Japanese people. The account has been purely historical and necessarily brief, and has therefore offered no scope for speculation, since it has been but a recording of fact. It is now hoped to show the effect of these various historical phenomena on the habits, customs, language, morals and general behaviour of the Japanese, so that a more accurate knowledge—and hence understanding—of their character and psychology may be obtained.

Hitherto, therefore, the record having been entirely impersonal, it was natural to write in the third person. The subject matter hereafter being a matter of personal observation and opinion, I have thought it better to use the first person—and singular at that. For I have a special antipathy to the editorial “we” as implying a gratuitous self-importance on the one hand, and on the other, as assuming a measure of agreement with the reader which may very often be quite unjustified.

The observations made in the second part of the book as well as the opinions formed from them, are the outcome of fourteen years’ intimate contact with the Japanese. The former are, I believe, accurate; but the conclusions to which I have come, the interpretations of those observed phenomena, are my own, and may vastly differ from those of others, who in some cases are better qualified to pass judgment than myself. Hence the “I” rather than the “we” !

I was once listening to a broadcast on a certain country which began somewhat as follows: “When a person has lived for many years in a foreign country, in close and daily association with its people—when ninety per cent of his social contacts and intimacies have been with the natives of that country, and those of almost

every class and profession; and when he can then look back upon those years as including some of the happiest of his life—it is no small praise of that country.” It was as though I was listening to myself! And yet I can truthfully affirm that never have I met a race the members of which can on occasion be so exasperating, so offensive, so unreliable and so generally impossible. It is indeed these extraordinary contradictions in behaviour that make a study of the Japanese so interesting—and so difficult. Of course I am not referring to those individuals who are naturally of an unpleasant character, ill-tempered, boorish and bad-mannered. One meets with such people among the Japanese, as among the English and Americans—and avoids them. No: the difficulty among the Japanese is that the same person will on different occasions show what seem to be completely opposite tendencies and characteristics, so that one is constantly being presented with problems of extreme complexity which can only be solved by patience, study, and above all time—time to co-ordinate the data and to eliminate any bias which may preclude a fair and balanced judgment.

This it is that I hope to be able to offer.

XI

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH. ISOLATION AND IMITATION

WHEN ONE approaches, from a psychological angle, the study of a whole people comprising one national group, one is immediately faced with what at first appears to be a reasonable objection. How is it possible to come to any sort of valid conclusion concerning a whole nation when the study can only be based on the observation of a comparatively few individuals, and these perhaps not fully representative of the class to which they belong?

To this it may be answered that the most effective way of solving any problem connected with the general behaviour of society as a whole is by studying the behaviour of the individuals composing it. It has rightly been observed that man himself is not merely an individual—he is in himself society in miniature. He comprises in himself precisely the same instincts and emotions, sentiments and complexes as are seen to prevail in the society of which he is an ethnic member. If we know the main influences to which this society has been subjected over a long period of time, we are able to judge from his actions and reactions the behaviour of that society, and understand where and why that behaviour appears to deviate from the line of conduct along which health and happiness should be found.

Society, then, is the reflection of the individual. Let us take, for example, the instinct that is so strikingly prevalent in Japan—the group, or, more correctly, the *herd* instinct. Although it is considered essentially “social”, yet it is in reality an individual instinct, for apart from the individual it could not exist. For the herd instinct is not the instinct of the herd, but of the individual, which forces him to behave in a manner approved by the herd, and in accordance with its prescriptions and inhibitions.

It is of course obvious that the value of one's observations is in direct ratio to the number of the individuals who have been made

the subject of observation and study. In this particular I was in a specially favourable position. My work brought me into intimate contact with a complete cross-section of Japanese society, ranging from the descendants of the ancient aristocracy to the humble peasant in his village, though the majority were of the ordinary middle class.

Now just as it is through the microscopical study of minute organisms that the diseases which ravage mankind are studied, so the study of the individual guides us in trying to solve the problems that arise from the maladies of society. "The passions that sway the mind of the individual—avarice, vanity, ambition, sex and fear—are the same as those which arouse the antagonisms of man to man and disturb the peace of society, and it is in the individual that they may be most effectively studied at first hand."¹

In the science of psycho-therapy, it is in most cases the patient himself who is most unconscious of his morbid condition. If and when he is aware of something wrong, it is the symptom only that sometimes causes him distress—while he remains in complete ignorance of the reason for the symptom. This is strikingly true of Japan at the present time. To the vast majority of the people, the war has been just an incident that has ended in an unexpected and most unpleasant manner. "Well—it is just too bad—but it can't be helped." There is certainly strong antagonism to, even condemnation of, the militarist hierarchy which led to this disaster: this is, however, not because the instinct of aggression and overweening ambition which they displayed was anti-social, but because they went into it ill-prepared and ill-informed as to the potential Allied strength, and deceived the people themselves by lying communiqués and propaganda.

This study, then, is an attempt to diagnose the psychological abnormalities of the people as a whole and then to suggest a line of remedial treatment which may be of some use in the reconstruction of Japan, and thus help to bring her eventually to a full and trusted partnership in the Commonwealth of Nations.

From one point of view, the study of Japan's development is easier than would be that of other nations, because of its uniqueness,

¹ J. A. Hadfield, *Psychology and Morals*.

its abnormality. The unfolding and growth of national groups are very much the same as those of the individuals that compose them, starting from infancy and passing through childhood and adolescence up to manhood and old age. The infancy of a nation is that prehistoric period, generally lost in the mists of antiquity. Gradually there arise the larger groupings of family, tribe and clan—corresponding to its childhood; there is ever an expansion of the community-sense involving the widening of contacts, and hence of units of government, which is typified by the feudal stage. This may be said to correspond to the adolescence of a nation, which gradually evolves into the full sense of national consciousness, into full manhood and responsibility. This would be the normal development of a nation. It is a constant but very gradual expansion of what Professor Giddings terms “the consciousness of kind”, and which he regards as the basic principle of social organization.

It is surely obvious that, should any circumstances occur, either in the life of an individual or of a nation, to interfere with this course of development, abnormalities are bound to result. Moreover, the process by which the subject passes from one stage to another is extremely slow. Who can define the moment in time when adolescence gives way to manhood—when the infant becomes the child? In the case of national growth, the process is, of course, enormously slower, and further complicated by the various stages of development reached by the different groups, castes, trades and associations which make up the community as a whole.

Now it is because Japan's evolution as a nation has not followed the normal course that she presents such a problem to the world to-day. Her normal evolution was suddenly interrupted in 1638, when the decree of the Shogun Hidetada closed the country to all contact with the outside world. “For two hundred and twenty years Japan was cut off from all the world. She had her own degree of social and artistic civilization . . . but while Europe was advancing with giant strides in industrial, military and political science, Japan stood still, and her internal state in the middle of the nineteenth century showed no material advance on what it had been in the early part of the seventeenth. *She was contented in herself and with*

her own acquirements, and neither knew nor cared for aught that was happening in the outer world.”¹

It has always been to me a source of astonishment that the tremendous significance of this isolation seems to have been overlooked, or rather underestimated, by many Japanese historians and cultural students. The fact is, of course, always mentioned; but its far-reaching implications and the gravity of its effect do not, save in very few instances, appear to have been recognized. Moreover, it is not as if, at the time of its closure, Japan had reached a stage of development comparable with that of contemporary European nations. She was confined to China, and China alone, for those intellectual stimuli which constitute the vital elements in cultural progress.

“What scholasticism did to free the European mind by initiating new intellectual movements from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, the Tsung philosophy failed to do for Japan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. . . . The dawn of the nineteenth century found Japan very much where Europe was in the days of William of Occam, five centuries before” (J. Ingram Bryan). It may indeed be estimated that when, in 1854, the country was compelled to open its doors to Western enterprise, its civilization was at about the same stage of development as thirteenth-century Europe.

In what way, then, and to how great an extent did the period of isolation affect Japanese character in general, and particularly in its relation to the modern world?

In examining the progress of a culture or civilization, we must take into consideration many elements, among them one of extreme and essential importance, especially in the present connection—that of imitation. For imitation is not only essential to all social *progress*; it is also the great *conservative* force of society; and in both directions it has played an unusually large part in determining the present stage of Japanese development.

If we consider imitation first as a *conservative* force, it is clear that the similarities that exist between the individuals of any one country, or any one social class or community in that country, are due to the intimate intercourse the members have, one with another—to their

¹ J. H. Longford, *The Evolution of Japan* (the italics are inserted).

imitation of one another, and to their accepting the same traditions. As a result we find similarities of language, of religious beliefs and moral standards, fashion in dress, and so forth. Thus, for example, in Japan there were special forms of language and address peculiar to the Samurai, and quite distinct from those of the Hyakusho. This difference actually survives to-day in the form of a special "military language"—*heigo*—which shows the stiff resistance of custom in Japan against new impacts.

It is clear from this example that, in certain circumstances, the conservative power of imitation will wield a far stronger influence than would normally be expected. Thus, where the barriers between classes are loosely constructed, members of one will influence those of another, so that, through imitation, a gradual mixing will take place, which will eventually lead to amalgamation. But where the barriers are rigid, and where they remain undisturbed for an unusually long time, the behaviour of each class, originally produced by imitation, becomes habitual and attains the force of custom within that class. Then custom becomes the sufficient justification and supreme sanction for all action. This was the state of affairs reached in Japan.

In any hierarchical society, however, a change in custom may be brought about, either from above through the influence of an aristocracy with high prestige; or from without. But in Japan it was to the interest of the upper classes to preserve the differences between classes; thus they held themselves aloof in order to strengthen their own exclusive superiority. So, during the two hundred and fifty years of isolation, the conservative force of imitation was abnormally intensified in Japan, not only because of the structure of her society, but also because for so long a period the country was deprived of those impacts from without which might have prevented custom from crystallizing into the moral code of extreme rigidity that it did.

Imitation as a means of *progress* works in two ways, which may be called "domestic" and "foreign". These two phrases imply; (a) the acceptance by the people of ideas and practices originated by their most advanced thinkers, or by those of the

highest prestige; (b) the acceptance and imitation of ideas and practices taken by one nation from another.

During the isolation period the people of Japan were confined to domestic imitation only, being entirely deprived of any foreign contact or influence; moreover, as has been shown, the imitative impulse was far more active in the conservative than in the progressive direction.

But while Japan was thus isolated, other nations were experiencing the progressive effect of imitation as never before. For "the imitation of one people by another has been a principal condition of the progress of civilization in all its stages, but more especially in its later stages."¹

Thus the present civilization of the West such as we see in the U.S.A. and the countries of Europe, has not been produced in each country by the original ideas and discoveries of its particular nationals only, but by contributions from the whole world.

When, therefore, superficial observers accuse the Japanese of being mere "copyists", they should remember that the accusation is one to which every country must plead guilty. It is true that the exercise of the imitative faculty has been more evident in the case of Japan than in that of any other nation, but the reason for this is that her leaders, by deliberate policy, set out to accomplish in as short a time as possible what other nations had unconsciously achieved over centuries. The rapidity of Japan's progress was also largely due to the structure of her society.

It is a basic law of imitation that prestige is the principal reason which causes a person or group to impress others. The workings of this law are specially evident in a strongly organized class society with an hereditary aristocracy such as Japan possessed. Thus, to cite the Samurai class once again, it has been shown how their practices—as for example in Zen Buddhism—and their ideals of loyalty and self-sacrifice, came to be adopted as models for the masses. From this it follows that when one country imitates another, it almost invariably happens that the adoption of foreign ideas by the upper classes leads gradually to their being taken up by

¹ W. McDougall, *Social Psychology*.

the people in general. From this fact McDougall draws an interesting, if tentative conclusion, the truth of which is certainly confirmed in the case of Japan. He writes: "It is then perhaps no mere coincidence that the progressive nations have been those whose social organization comprises an hereditary aristocracy and a hierarchy of classes"—and goes on to suggest that this may to a great extent have accounted for the difference between Japan and China in regard to their adoption of Western ideas. For in the former, it was the acceptance, by an aristocracy enjoying the highest prestige, of forms of Western civilization, which led to the rapid dissemination of these new ideas among the people in general; while in China the governing class has no such hereditary prestige, nor is there an hereditary aristocracy with ideas borrowed from abroad.

The people were led to an almost hysterical degree of imitation by the enthusiasm felt throughout Japan for the authority of the Imperial Ruler—restored after a seclusion of so many centuries—and by their desire to carry out his wish that they should acquire knowledge from all over the world. But the shock to the personalities of the people must have been terrific, for the isolation period had intensified the conservative force of imitation far beyond the normal, so that custom and codes of conduct had acquired an extreme rigidity.

The effect of this extraordinary change has been to afflict the Japanese with what may almost be described as a split personality. In matters of ordinary conduct, however, it has resulted in their often behaving in ways that are more usually characteristic of nervous, highly strung children. There is the intense dislike of being in an environment to which they are unaccustomed, a nervous showing-off, sudden changes of temperament, and sometimes quite distressing instability of emotion—all the result of the never-ceasing conflict between the old and the new: the desire to adopt modern ideas clashing with the ever present fear of failure, ridicule, and consequent loss of face.

It is curious that other countries and powers, in dealing with the nation as a whole, do not seem to have taken this psychic condition of the people into account. It is true, of course, that they have had to deal with the nation's leaders—those who, by travel, by wide

reading, and by possessing ability far above their fellows—have succeeded in adapting themselves more completely to the modern world. But the difference between such leaders and the ordinary people is so great as almost to be a difference in kind rather than in quality. So much is this so, that some foreigners with a superficial knowledge of Japan and her people roundly declare that the latter are “mere children”. This is nonsense ! But the shock experienced in the sudden change from feudal isolation to the rush of modern ideas and impacts, has emphatically caused a division in the personality, making adjustment extremely difficult, and resulting in frequent manifestations of childlike conduct.

That this abnormality will become ever more evident as we examine Japanese behaviour patterns and reactions to the incidents of life, I am confident. But I must here make a comment, of whose truth I am convinced. It is that the efforts made by the Japanese people to bring about the adjustments necessary to fit them for the modern world have been stupendous. They have found themselves over and over again faced with circumstances which have not merely delayed their progress, but which have been deliberately designed to do so—plans devised even to force them back into a condition from which they believed themselves to have escaped years and years before.

How the people, from the beginning of Japan's history, have been held down by a series of oligarchies, has been well demonstrated by John M. Maki in his book, *Japanese Militarism*. Of all these oligarchies surely that of the past fifteen years has been the most utterly pernicious. There is little doubt but that the Emperor Meiji (1858–1912) was himself actuated by the highest ideals and intentions in regard to his people's general progress and emancipation. Unfortunately, when still quite young, he fell under the influence of that supreme reactionary, Yamagata. But during the latter years of the Emperor Taisho (1912–27) there did seem to be a real hope of the people attaining some degree of freedom. It was the military hierarchy combined with that of the *Zaibatsu*¹ which, from 1927

¹ A collective name for the group of immensely powerful banking and business houses which together controlled more than half of Japan's economic life. The group has been dissolved by order of the Allied Occupation Authorities.

onwards, deliberately worked to throw them back into the conditions of subjection they had experienced under the Shogunate, in order that the Army and the Zaibatsu themselves might keep in power as the ruling force under the Imperial wing.

Yet in spite of these disheartening set-backs, there has always been a section of the people which has never ceased striving. In general, too, the unremitting industry of the people is astonishing. This is evident right through Japanese life. In his capacity for work, the student is almost proverbial. The peasants in the rice fields or on mulberry cultivation and silk-worm breeding, labour from dawn to night. Small shopkeepers rarely close their shutters before ten p.m. This urge to "keep at it", to do one's duty, to fulfil one's obligations, is extremely strong in the Japanese.

Yet a curious and significant fact is that, as far as the students are concerned, so many—the vast majority indeed—seem to come to a full stop when the scholastic life is finished. Young men of the greatest promise fail to fulfil it. They appear to fade out, as though exhausted, as indeed they may well be. The reason for this is two-fold. In the first place, whether in school or University, to reach a certain standard, to get to the end of a course, is the student's duty and obligation, to which he will devote every scrap of his energy. Secondly, he is working as one of a group, and this is of the utmost importance and help to him. On his leaving, unless of course his scholastic studies have been directly connected with his future profession, his whole energies will be concentrated on his new life, whatever it may be. Into that he will throw himself as ardently as he did into his studies. He will have no time for extraneous activities; should he pursue any, he will be alone: it will most likely be an activity in which his immediate companions—be they of his family or only business associates—have little or no interest. So the subject is dropped as being no longer of practical value. From this two deductions as to the average Japanese may be made: (a) that he is intensely scrupulous in the carrying out of *what he believes* to be his duty; (b) that he is far more of a realist than an idealist, using the latter term in the usual Western sense.

The italicized words in the first deduction account for much that

frequently puzzles, and sometimes greatly annoys, the resident foreigner. It accounts for the assassination of Government officials on the one hand; for exasperating happenings in one's domestic affairs on the other.

For example, you tell your cook that to-day you would like some mutton; you are given beef. Why? Because *danna san*¹ is a foreigner and *must* therefore be ignorant of the market prices. It is cook's duty to keep down the books as much as possible. Of course *danna san* didn't really mean mutton, for it is too expensive. So it is cook's obvious duty to buy beef !

Or perhaps you are in a rickshaw in Yokohama. You choose a young, strong fellow and ask him to hurry as you have an appointment. All goes well until he suddenly draws up behind another rickshaw drawn by a much older man who is moving at a gentle jog-trot. Why doesn't your lad pass? It is another interpretation of duty—this time to his Guild. By passing the older man he may humiliate him by his exhibition of youthful strength, so he awaits a by-street down which he tears, and eventually comes out in front of his ancient colleague without actually passing him.

It will at once be realized that there must be frequent conflicts in the mind of a Japanese as to the precedence of seemingly opposed duties. This is so, but the subject is so complicated as to require a separate chapter.

Before we discuss it, however, we must remind ourselves of the necessity of trying to see the Japanese point of view. Although some of the modes of conduct which we shall come across, and which have been prescribed by custom and enforced by supernatural sanctions, may not be at all what we regard as "moral", they are not to be condemned on that account. We must recall the tremendous influence exercised on the individual by the *kami* conception, as well as the weight of tradition and habit imposed on every Japanese by the communal and family authority; and even though some acts held to be virtuous seem actually detrimental to the society in which they are customary, and so cannot be justified on

¹ *Danna san*—the master of the house.

utilitarian grounds, yet we are bound to consider the performance of such acts as "moral" conduct.

For example, the custom of a girl selling herself, either on her own impulse or at the behest of her parents, to prostitution, seems to us utterly revolting; we feel therefore that Japanese society, which permits such a custom, must itself—collectively and individually—be revolting.

Yet it must always be remembered that the essence of "moral" conduct is the performance, according to one's lights, of social duty, the duty prescribed by society, as opposed to the carrying out of one's own personal and egoistic desires. The dictates of "filial piety" lay down that there is no sacrifice so great that it can be refused by a child for its parents. Loathed as it is by the victim herself, yet, if the sacrifice is required of her, she is bound by her sense of duty to perform it.

Now if we accept the definition of "moral conduct" in the wide sense suggested above, i.e. the performance of the duty prescribed by society—and it is difficult to conceive any other equally satisfactory—then, however grotesque, however horrible such a code of conduct appears to be from our own point of view, we must agree that, for the people concerned, the carrying out of the provisions and prescriptions of that code is "moral conduct".

There is admittedly a higher type of morality practised by those who, while accepting the prescribed social code as a whole, try by protest and instruction, to eliminate from it those elements which they consider undesirable. Of such reformers there have been, and are, many in Japan. There is no doubt that their ideas and efforts are the outcome of Christian influence, endeavour and example. These efforts are even now bearing rich fruit. But in trying to obtain a true picture of Japanese mentality, I have endeavoured to act as a simple observer and recorder—not as a judge.

It may help us to obtain a balanced point of view if we remember that, to the average Japanese, the precept, "for this cause shall a man forsake his father and mother and cleave to his wife"—is extremely "unmoral" !

XII

SPLIT PERSONALITIES ? ATROCITY PHENOMENA EXAMINED

AMONG the many effects of the isolation period on the people as a whole, there is one in particular which often seems to escape the notice of foreigners. It is also extremely unlikely that the Japanese themselves realize it. It produces in them what, for want of a better word, I may call a "dual consciousness" or even a "split personality".

Some four years ago there was published a book called *Bushido*, being the personal history of a young White Russian who was forced into the Japanese Secret Service in Manchuria. In a terrible chapter called "The Second Floor" he describes how the Japanese gendarmerie broke him to their will. He was shut up in a barred cell barely larger than a dog kennel. Other victims were similarly lodged on both sides of the long, narrow passage. All were stark naked and kept so. There were no sanitary conveniences. Food was thrown to them on the floor. There were no utensils. They were treated as animals. Some had been there for weeks, women as well as men. The author himself had been betrayed into this position by a former "friend" whom we may call Sudo.

For two years Sudo had been running a large barber's establishment in Harbin, and had been a close and intimate friend of the author's family. He appeared to be a charming, cultured and delightful companion. The families had visited each other's houses, and their relationship was on the most satisfactory and kindly basis. But Sudo was leading a double life; his real job happened to be the local head of the Secret Police. Suddenly, without any warning, our author was arrested. After being knocked about and tortured under the direction of the "friend of the family", he was thrown into a cell. Among the prisoners was an old Chinaman in

the next cell. He was rapidly dying from the effects of the frightful tortures he had endured during the past two months. A few moments before he died, he whispered to the young Russian, "You will never understand the nature of the Japanese until you realize that in every one of them there are two distinct people."

Then he changed his world.

It was a profound remark, and its truth is repeatedly demonstrated in the ordinary everyday contacts that are made in Japan.

It has been shown in Part I that, for at least twelve hundred years, the code that ruled society was that of Power. Might was Right. The lower had to dance to the tune played by the higher, the younger to give way to the elder, the female to the male, the poor to the rich, and so on. The latter half of those twelve hundred years saw the inception, establishment and decay of the feudal system, during which the subjection of the under-dog and the authority of the ruler reached their extremes. For generations every Japanese had a feudal mentality, a feudal outlook and attitude towards life, which governed all his relations with his fellow men and his surroundings. In 1858, not quite ninety years ago, Japanese feudalism was officially abolished. In England the system came to an end in 1485—four hundred and sixty years ago. Yet there may still be found on some of the old estates, especially in Scotland, families who have served the lord of the manor for generations; the relationship between them still remains at least emotionally feudal. Is it to be expected that in Japan such a mentality could be wiped out by a stroke of the pen? Such a supposition would be an absurdity.

It may therefore be said that in every Japanese, to a greater or lesser extent, there exists two consciousnesses—the "feudal" with all that that implies, and what I will term the "modern" consciousness.

In pre-war Japan the feudal mentality was to be found in its most intense form in the Army. To such a mentality, inherited from the past, there is only one way of controlling the inferior, of inculcating discipline—that is, by oppression and brutality. It is extremely doubtful, however, if the actors would ever think of their behaviour in such terms, any more than would a Samurai of the Tokugawa era

when he cut down a commoner for behaving in a manner "other than is expected".

An examination of the Japanese colonial government in Korea and Formosa bears out this theory. The Governor of both territories was always a General of long and distinguished service. Both countries swarmed with the Military Police, the notorious *kempeitai*, both uniformed and secret. The method of ruling was by frank brutality. The same thing was to be observed during the War in all the Japanese occupied areas. Disobedience was punished by floggings, torture and executions; the old feudal methods.

It may be objected, however, that while this may be true among the officer class, especially those of Samurai families, it cannot apply in the same degree to every private of a conscript Army. That is true, for the average Japanese youth, left to himself, is not brutal and cruel. But the germ is there in every Japanese, and it can be made to develop with disastrous speed.

On a certain day in Tokyo I happened to be passing the parade ground of a large barracks. The men were drawn up and I stopped to watch their drill. At the word of command they fell smartly to attention. The sergeant in charge then walked down the ranks, calmly hitting each one on the face with the heel of a heavy, steel-studded military boot—giving each two or three blows and barking out insults and abuse. I was amazed, and thoroughly disgusted. On my asking a friend the reason for this shocking exhibition of temper, he was almost amused. "Oh, they must have been recruits on one of their first parades," he answered. "They all go through it. They learn to bear pain and keep their tempers, and when they become seniors, they'll take it out of the newcomers in the same way!"

There were other methods, particularly on active service, of promoting the "Samurai spirit"—the beau ideal of the feudal age. Thus in Manchuria, when the *gendarmérie* caught a "bandit"—a term used for anyone they did not like—he would sometimes be buried up to his neck and left without food or water. The young soldiers would then be marched out to the place where he was buried, every day until he died, and were there halted so that they

might watch his agony. In the same class of treatment must be included the bayoneting of living prisoners.

Some young soldiers, however, are unable to endure such horrors, with the result that they either go insane or kill themselves. They are sensitive types.

"What's that?" I can hear someone exclaim. "D'you mean to say that any of these savages can be 'sensitive'?"

Let me give another picture. There are in Tokyo six large and important Universities. In the close neighbourhood of each there is a fair-sized café of a peculiar kind. At the end of the room there is usually a dais on which is the best electric gramophone that money can buy. Stacked near by on shelves are hundreds of albums, all containing records of the very best Western classical music. In some the programme is arranged daily and posted on the wall. In others the manager will put on whatever his clients ask for. These cafés are packed full of students from the moment of opening until closing time. No table utensils such as knives or forks are provided, for they might make a clatter. Coffee, tea, and cakes are the fare. Speech is in whispers. Is anything like this to be found in an English University, or any English town? It may be so, but in the course of my rather wide wanderings about the world I have never met with it anywhere else. In which connection I may add that the representative of one of the largest record manufacturing companies told me that Japan was the biggest importer of classical records in the world!

Then again in the sphere of Art—especially in painting, drawing and decoration—can anything more delicate, more exquisite, more *sensitive* than the Japanese idiom be conceived?

I repeat that the average modern Japanese is not brutal; but it is indisputable that, owing partly to his recent feudal past, he can be made so far more easily than his Western counterpart. Nor, I think, can it be denied that the Japanese, both culturally and socially, have made swifter progress than any Western nations would have made in the same time, judging by the history of the latter. Even if it is allowed that Japan's standard of civilization at the time of the Isolation Decree (1638) was equal to that of

Europe at the same date—which it was not—could the progress of European culture during the ensuing ninety years, i.e. up to 1728, compare with that made in Japan since 1854?

It will, of course, be argued that the cases are not truly parallel because Japan has had the advantage of being able to draw on the experience of other, more advanced, nations. That is perfectly true. But let it also be admitted that the courage and persistence with which she has done so have been remarkable.

This dual consciousness of which we have been speaking is naturally very variable in its manifestations, depending as it does on two factors: first, the degree to which either the feudal or the modern concept of life predominates in the individual; and second, the amount of his self-control. The former factor will largely depend on the number and type of the contacts he has had with Western ideas. There may still be peasant communities, in out-of-the-way districts, which have never seen a white man. Their only contact with the West will either have been at second or third hand through a Government official—who may or may not have come up against Western people or books in the nearest town: or else through conscripts returning from their military service. The children may also bring back some curious ideas from their school, but these will hardly be likely to survive for long under the weight of family and communal authority. The outlook of such villages will be almost wholly feudal.

It must not, however, be forgotten that the old-fashioned mind of Japan which I have termed “feudal” also contained many excellent qualities, among which stands out a dignified and exquisite courtesy that is, I believe, unique. The further one travels off the beaten track, the more one’s sense of increasing physical discomfort is forgotten in the surrounding atmosphere of dignified welcome, natural delicacy and the real hospitality of the heart. May Heaven forbid that, in the present crisis of her history, Japan should learn to adopt the crude manners of the West—the back-slapping type of familiarity, or the indecorous guffawing that passes for mirth!

At the other extreme from the peasants of these isolated communities is the highly cultured and widely travelled Japanese who,

while retaining the best qualities of his race, has adapted himself completely to the modern world. Between these two extremes there is every variety of "feudal" and "modern" mental combination. It is this fact that largely accounts for the puzzling changes of temperament that are so often encountered when one is dealing with a Japanese, and which are but reflections of the outlook that happens to be in the ascendant at the moment. In most cases I feel sure that the individual is himself quite unconscious of what is occurring; but that many do realize that they are subject to sudden and apparently inexplicable changes in mood and temperament I know, and also that it sometimes causes them considerable distress.

One day in 1940 I received a visit from a friend I had known for some years. He had just returned to Tokyo after a year's absence in Manchuria and China. He had formerly paid long visits both to the U.S.A. and England, and had travelled through Europe. He spoke excellent English and French, was well read, especially in philosophy and mysticism—which is unusual for a Japanese—and was about forty-five years old. Only very occasionally had we discussed politics, for the subject was not of much interest to either of us; but his general attitude was, as might be expected, definitely liberal.

Now some time before, there had been a political sensation in Japan in connection with a certain Professor, Dr. Minobe, who had held the position of Professor Emeritus at the Imperial University, his subject being Political Science. Many years before he had published a book on Political Theory in Japan, in which he had defined the Emperor as "an organ of the State". The book had been used throughout the Universities in Japan and was widely read by the public. The Emperor had himself given his approval to the theories expressed therein.

In 1938 the old Professor found himself violently attacked by the Militarist gang, who asserted that the "organ of the State" theory was *lèse-majesté*. The learned author was forced to resign from all the positions he held. Later an attempt was made on his life, but he fortunately escaped with a bullet through the thigh. He was then indicted for treason, tried, and given a deferred sentence of two years' imprisonment.

My visitor, before leaving for Manchuria, had been to see me, and at that time had been full of righteous indignation over Minobe's persecution. He had also been full of contempt for "those ignorant gangsters", as he called them, who had dared to criticize so profound a scholar. Imagine, then, my amazement when, on this latest visit, he suddenly said:

"I, like many Japanese, used to believe in Professor Minobe and his theory that the Emperor was 'an organ of the State'. But now I see how wrong I was."

"Then what do you now believe?" I asked.

"*We Japanese*," he replied, "do not 'believe' in this matter; we *know* that the Emperor is the descendant of the 'gods'. As far as man can be on earth, he is a 'god'."

I reminded him of his former strongly expressed views on the Militarists and their conduct.

"I know," said he, quite unabashed. "I was very foolish in those days. Now I'm exceedingly grateful to them. They have reminded me that I am a true Japanese—they have made me *realize my Japanese heritage*."

Here was no case of intellectual dishonesty, but rather a complete *bouleversement* of the mentality. The pressure of propaganda, together with the Japanese military atmosphere of Manchuria, had brought the feudal viewpoint right to the surface; to the complete—though I am sure only temporary—extinction of his liberalism.

The italicized expression, "*we Japanese*," is very significant. This identification of the speaker's self with the whole national community is, I think, peculiar to Japan. Its use is not invariable, but when it is employed, it is a sure indication that for the moment the past is coming to the surface. But in general there is no such warning. You are having an ordinary conversation with some friend or acquaintance; you pass from subject to subject; suddenly you realize that the "being" of your companion is changed. There has been no outward sign. The expression, the tone of voice, all remain as before. But you are speaking to a personality of the feudal age, though he himself has not the faintest suspicion that this is so.

This duality accounts for a very great deal of what, to the Western

mind, seems so unaccountable, so strange and contradictory; it is, I think, largely responsible for the instability of temperament that is so noticeable a feature of the Japanese. This instability is not incompatible with that tenacity of purpose which they display in carrying out what they believe to be their duty, for the latter is in the domain of the will—the former in that of the emotions.

As I have already said, this persistence of the feudal instinct was at least partially responsible for the methods used by the Japanese colonial Government in its treatment of subject peoples. Indeed, I believe it to be the fundamental cause. But to account for the many individual and collective acts of cruelty during the war, other elements must be taken into consideration.

After what has been written in Part I, it is not necessary to emphasize here the extreme rigidity of the social system under which the ordinary Japanese is brought up. The constant suppression to which he is subjected, the necessity of continual self-denial, the burden of custom and etiquette, all involve frustration on every side. He becomes the victim of many repressions.

Psychologically speaking, of course, there is a vast difference between "suppression" and "repression". In the former we recognize certain impulses, but consciously refuse to give them expression. It may be that we feel they are wrong in themselves, or that the time is not convenient, or that for any other reason they had better be kept under. "Repression", on the other hand, is an unconscious process, in which the impulse is, for some reason or other, not recognized; this gives rise to complexes and other morbid conditions, from which the Japanese—especially the youth of the country—suffer greatly. The tremendous reserve imposed on the growing child, the stringency of the rules and regulations imposed by the social system, all compel him to drive his impulses below the surface of the conscious. It is nature's method of preserving the individual's peace of mind.

In all of us there exist certain instincts, among which are two, mutually opposed, but of the greatest importance. They are the instincts of *self-assertion* and *submission*. It will, of course, be realized that the instinct of self-assertion, healthily developed, is of the greatest value for society, for it establishes the dominance of

the individual, and thus leads to the emergence of leaders from the community. If developed along unnatural lines, however, it is easily perverted to the basest of uses.

Now in Japan, the individual is, from childhood, exposed to a constant and unnatural stimulation of these two instincts. In regard to self-assertion he is told that he belongs to a nation that is unique in its superiority to all others. He is ruled by a "descendant of the gods", the divine ruler of the divine land; for is not Nippon the land of the gods? He himself, being a Japanese, is *ipso facto* "divine" for, in a lesser degree, he, too, is a descendant of the gods, while all the rest of humanity originate from monkeys. With such ideas every Japanese child has been indoctrinated, in season and out of season, directly and indirectly, officially and unofficially, for years. During the ten years immediately preceding the war, however, such teaching was tremendously reinforced by the intense "power-propaganda" campaign used in every educational establishment, and throughout the country. A brief outline of this was given in Chapter X. Psychologically speaking, the whole of this propaganda was nothing but a drive to produce a still greater exaggeration of the instinct of self-assertion. It can be seen, therefore, that the Japanese people in general, the youth in particular, were exposed to assault from two directions, each supplementary to the other. The first was the "innate superiority" attack in view of their divine ancestry. The second was the inculcation of hatred of the inferior and contemptible nations who had insulted their Emperor, their land, and themselves as Japanese.

Now, the "self-assertion" instinct, when over-developed and unhealthily directed, gives rise to two forms of perversion—sadism and sheer cruelty. These two must be distinguished. Sadism is a manifestation of cruelty sexual in nature. It is the infliction of pain on the sexually desired person—that, and that only. Therefore to describe the majority of war-atrocities as sadistic—which has so often been done—is incorrect. They have been nothing but the inevitable result of a perverted power impulse, deliberately developed in the people by an artificial and gross over-stimulation of their self-assertion instinct.

There is, however, in the case of the Japanese, another element which must not be overlooked—the instinct of submission. This, too, has been subjected to an unnatural stimulation. It has been shown how, in Japan, the whole of an individual's life from infancy onwards, is one of submission to authority. This, with whatever damage to the healthy development of his own *psyche*, he accepts as part of his social environment. But in his relation to Europeans, he *feels* it to be the right attitude. The smallness of the Japanese and their enforced reliance on the West for modern knowledge, give them this feeling of inferiority. It is this, of course, which accounts for the compensating swagger and arrogance that are sometimes displayed towards foreigners—though never towards their own people. In general, however, it is suppressed. Now this feeling of inferiority, forcibly suppressed, gives rise to emotions of hatred and the desire for revenge.

In interpreting the "atrocities" phenomena of the Japanese, therefore, we are presented with certain elements which are cumulative in their effect. There is, first, the persisting feudal outlook which regards force and brutality as the normal methods of control. Secondly, there is an intensely over-stimulated self-assertion instinct resulting in a grossly exaggerated power-impulse, the perversion of which invariably manifests itself in cruelty. Thirdly, there is the feeling of inferiority to the Western foreigner, which is the root of suppressed hatred. Fourthly, there is the deliberate stimulation of this hate-emotion by the pre-War "power propaganda" campaign. Fifthly and finally, there is the unremitting suppression of all individual emotion imposed by the social code. But in wartime it is inevitable that all the ordinary restrictions and barriers imposed by that code will either break down or be removed. All those emotions so long and sternly suppressed—those feelings of hatred stimulated almost to madness, those desires to *avenge* the age-long insults they have heard of from their rulers, those impulses to inflict such punishment as their forebears would approve—all at long last burst their bonds. The awful and unspeakable results of that explosion the world now knows.

This then is, I think, the solution to a problem which has puzzled

so many who have to some degree known Japan and her people. How is it possible that those who in normal life are so charming, who have such exquisite manners, who can be so delicate in their attentions and courtesies—how can any members of such a race have been guilty of such horrors? I hope that what has been said above will throw some light upon it.

Personally I cannot agree that the Japanese people, if left to themselves, are aggressive by nature. I suggest that this is shown by the duration and intensity of the propaganda to which they were subjected. The Militarist gang had their fingers on the pulse of the nation for ten years at least. Their spies were everywhere, while their propaganda permeated every building, cottage and shack throughout the land. They knew well that they *could* not start on a colossal war without having the people solidly behind them. And though this same people were, by training and instinct, wonderfully submissive to the voice of authority, it yet took ten years to rouse in them the spirit of aggression to a degree which would justify the government in launching the war.

I would here like to add a word on that instinct of submission, if only because Japanese history provides us with a remarkable example of its sublimation. Submission in its normal, healthy form is simply the virtue of humility. Originally it was developed in obedience to the "herd instinct" for, unless willing submission was given to the requirements of the primitive group, all cohesion would be at an end.

It has been shown how the "group" form of society still persists in Japan, and how strong an influence it exerts. It is natural, therefore, that the instinct of submission should be much in evidence, both in its normal and its perverted forms. Such perversion, when unaffected by an extraneous influence, manifests itself as *masochism*—the pleasure in being over-mastered, in being humiliated even to the infliction of pain. The Japanese child has an extremely hard upbringing, in which he is expected to practise many forms of self-discipline and, as we know, constant self-denial. He must get into a cold bed at night and often lie cold owing to the insufficiency of covering, and dress in a very cold and draughty room after washing

in icy water. As a schoolboy, he is expected to go to his early morning wrestling or *judo* practice in mid-winter. During the same season, groups of half a dozen or so will go for a run of perhaps five or six miles, clad in a thin cotton tunic and pants, and with bare feet. They will make for a waterfall under which they will sit, or a river into which they will plunge. Some prefer to visit a shrine famous for the depth of its well and the iciness of the well-water. This will be drawn up in buckets and poured over them. Then in soaking wet garments they run back to their homes. Such excursions are known as "winter exercises" and are done to "harden the spirit". For the same reason primary schools are unheated in winter, and, believe me, it *can* be cold in Japan, to say nothing of the bitter north and north-westerly winds.

Now there is not a shadow of a doubt that the average Japanese youth gets considerable pleasure and satisfaction from giving himself such pain and experiencing such discomfort. He knows he has got to go through with it, and that to take pleasure in it is the surest way to meet it. Indeed, he will sometimes think out means of increasing the pain, for no other reason than to outdo his companions. In all this there is indubitably a strong element of masochism.

But when the instinct of submission is really sublimated, then are seen those men and women who are indifferent to the pain they suffer in witness to a great cause. This is true sublimation. A wonderful example of this was the patience and courage shown in the terrible persecution of the Christians during the seventeenth century.

When suffering is undergone just for its own sake, or for personal satisfaction, or for any other inadequate reason, then it is masochism. But when those thousands of men, women and children gladly endured the agonies of fear, torture and death simply for the sake of their Faith—then there was real sublimation.

XIII

OBJECTIVES, OBLIGATIONS AND OBSESSIONS

TO THE Western mind, one of the most puzzling aspects of the Japanese is their attitude to death in general, to suicide in particular. Because in the West suicide is regarded only as an escape from the rigours and difficulties of life which the individual feels himself unable to face, it is almost invariably considered cowardly. The incidence of suicide being greater in Japan than in the U.S.A. or in Europe, it is assumed that the Japanese must somewhere have a craven streak in them, which renders them less capable of facing up to life's hardships; or that their mind is so delicately balanced that it is overturned more easily. Neither of these assumptions is altogether true.

It may be said that the attitude of the Japanese towards death in general is far more positive than the attitude of the West. We know that it is inevitable, and, on its approach, do all that is possible to delay its advent. But when there is "no hope" (and what a detestable expression that is !) we are completely resigned to it and accept it with passive submission.

This is not at all the Japanese point of view. Their attitude was excellently summed up in a broadcast from Tokyo in 1944. Having pointed out that "contemporary Japanese are all heirs to the Samurai", the speaker went on: "The Samurai was trained to think of death in exactly the same way as he thought of life. How best to die constitutes the highest part of Samurai training, as much as how best to live."

In other words, a good death is that by which one accomplishes something.

The viewpoint is active rather than passive. In wartime, of course, this can be carried out with ease; but what of ordinary life ?

Then the individual consciously feels that by his approaching death he is effecting something for his heir or for his family, or for those who will benefit under his Will. With some such thought in mind he prepares for death during his lifetime.

The prevalence of suicide in Japan makes it advisable for us to consider it under two aspects. The first is ceremonial suicide, familiar to all as *harakiri*¹, or, to use the more refined term, *seppuku*. In this class must also be included those mass suicides committed on the battlefield by hand grenades or other means; also the suicide of the band of youths who piloted the "crash planes". The second class is that of ordinary suicides, in which the reasons and methods are much the same as in the West.

Seppuku was one of the privileges of the Samurai class. It was either compulsory or voluntary. In the former case it was imposed as a punishment for crimes which would normally have earned the death sentence. To save the sensitive honour of the Samurai, which would have been irretrievably smirched by his being left to the vulgar attentions of the outcast *Eta* executioner, he was allowed the privilege of having his head removed by a brother Samurai using the Samurai sword. For though the sentence was to commit *harakiri*, death was caused by decapitation. When such a sentence was passed, the ceremonies which had to accompany the act were extremely complicated and laid down with great exactitude.

A full and most interesting account of them, as of the subject in general, is given in an Appendix of Lord Redesdale's fascinating *Tales of Old Japan*, to which those interested are referred. Suffice it to say here that there seem to have been three grades of *seppuku* according to the seriousness of the offence. In the mildest form the condemned sat in front of a small stand on which was placed a wooden dirk, some distance in front of him. As he leant forward reaching for the dirk his second, always a personal friend and notable swordsman, took off his head.

In the second grade the dirk was of steel. Having lifted it off the stand, the condemned would stab himself below the left rib and lower his head, which was immediately severed.

¹ *Harakiri*—from *hara*, the belly and *kiru*, to cut.

In the last, the victim, having given himself a deep stab, drew the dirk *slowly* across the abdomen, giving it a sharp turn upwards at the end, against the right lower rib; only then would he bend forward for the final blow.

When *seppuku* was carried out voluntarily, it was always with a definite purpose in view. In general, it was to remove some actual or fancied stain on the honour. But it was often done with other objects in mind. Thus on the day fixed for the funeral of the Emperor Meiji, in 1912, General Nogi, who had been his life-long friend and adviser, committed *seppuku* without any second to end his agony with one swift cut. At the same time, and in the same room, Lady Nogi performed *jigai*.¹ Here the purpose was that they might together continue their services to their beloved Emperor in the other world.

The famous story of the forty-seven Ronin provides another and yet higher reason for the self-inflicted death—to bring peace and rest to the soul of their former lord, the Daimyo Asano Takumi no Kami. He had been unjustly condemned to commit *seppuku* for having attacked another Daimyo, Kira Kotsuké no Suké, who had insulted him.

Forty-seven of Asano's Samurai determined to carry out their lord's vengeance. After planning and striving for over a year, they succeeded, and having cut off the head of Kotsuké no Suké with their master's dirk, brought the head and the dirk and laid them on Asano's tomb. They also, as was the custom, left there a document setting forth the reasons for their act. It must be understood that, before they started their scheme, they all knew that for attacking so great a Daimyo as Kotsuké no Suké they would certainly be condemned to death.

The last part of the document reads:

"Having taken counsel together last night, we have escorted my Lord Kotsuké no Suké hither to your tomb. This dirk, by which our honoured lord set great store last year, and entrusted to our care, we now bring back. If your noble spirit be now present before

¹ *Jigai*, the form of ceremonial suicide for women—piercing the throat with a single cut and thrust movement so as to sever the arteries.

this tomb, we pray you as a sign, to take the dirk and, striking the head of your enemy with it a second time, to dispel your hatred for ever."¹

The ultimate object of their action was not merely vengeance, but the desire to bring peace to the departed soul, the *kami*, who, it will be remembered, is thought to be just as he was when on earth but with all his faculties and emotions enhanced. This object could not be achieved without involving their own deaths. Note, too, the ironic but dignified wording of the first line of the quotation.

In ancient times—and there have been instances even in these latter years—a wife would kill herself when her husband was at war in order to relieve his mind of any worry about her and so leave him free to devote all his attention to his duty.

Another reason for suicide was moral protest. When a lord behaved badly and refused to listen to the reasoned and courteous rebuke of his chief retainer or perhaps his own wife, one or other would commit suicide, not merely to call attention to the lord's behaviour, but to force him to realize how disgraceful he or she considered it. By living they might appear to countenance it.

It will be admitted that there is nothing cowardly about such acts. At the same time it shows the gulf that exists between the Japanese and the Western ideas of death in general, and suicide in particular.

That suicide among the ordinary people in Japan is far more common than in the West is unfortunately true. This is due very largely to the peculiar organization of the social system and to the maladjustment of the individual to his environment. Sometimes it is done from the highest motives, as is seen in Hearn's most touching story, "Yuko: A Reminiscence".² Frequently it is due to a love affair which can never be brought to a happy termination. But in general it is due to a malaise of spirit caused by the difficulties and strain of life. Students who, after tremendous and sustained effort, fail in examination, often feel they have disgraced the family, that they are no good—and decide to "change their world". This

¹ Translation from Lord Redesdale's *Tales of Old Japan*.

² From *Out of the East*.

is one of the saddest phenomena in Japanese education, and it is sincerely to be hoped that the complete reorganization of the system now being effected will eliminate the terrible strain and unfair methods to which Japanese youth has for so long been exposed. Economic reasons also play a certain part. But in general it may be said that the Japanese are subject to attacks of terrible depression, symptomatic of their grave emotional instability.

The determination with which death is thus sought by the Japanese is largely, I think, due to that sense of obligation which was referred to before. It is this which prescribes for each his duty, as he conceives it in any specific circumstances. As the outcome of a centuries-old society whose various groupings claim the loyalty and obedience of the individual with complete disregard of his own aspirations, desires, or natural gifts, there was bound to spring up in the individual mind, not only constant suppressions giving rise to resentment and psychic conflicts, but also bewilderment in the maze of divided loyalties through which he had, by some means or other, to find his way. Due to this, there gradually developed a definite system of loyalties or obligations, which in reality forms the basis on which Japanese ethical theory is founded. Without some knowledge of this, it is often impossible to grasp the reason for Japanese behaviour, and hence arise what to the Western mind seem irreconcilable contradictions.

When one is living in a foreign land for any length of time, particularly when one really wishes to learn something of the life around one, it is extremely interesting to note how certain words, at first hardly noticed, gradually force themselves on the attention, and then seem to assume more and more importance until finally they are incorporated into the actual linguistic experience of the visitor. It is then found that some words to which one is introduced have, as it were, certain close relatives to whom one must also be presented if one wishes to become really intimate with any of the group.

Such a word is the Japanese *on*, which is translated in the dictionary as "kindness, favour, grace". Now this small word is actually the basis on which Japanese behaviour is built up. For the people of Japan do not take a kindness or a favour done to them

just as a matter of course. The most trifling service is regarded as putting the receiver under a debt which he is bound, so far as possible, to repay. So *on* carries with it two other words which denote the obligation of repayment; they are *gimu* and *giri*. Both of these words have approximately the same meaning, "obligation" or "duty"; but in practice there is a difference between them, just as there are different kinds of *on*.

It is clear that in any closely knit social system there must be different degrees of obligation, and where society is strongly regimented, as has been the case in Japan, the different types of obligation will be likely to follow the general pattern of that society. Thus, as would be expected, the highest types of obligation for all Japanese are those due (a) to the Emperor and (b) to parents. The first of these is known as *ko-on*, the second *oya-on*, and they are far superior to all other kinds of obligation.

A true Japanese believed that he owed everything, even his existence, to "the virtues of the Emperor". There was nothing that he possessed which had not originated from this source, and therefore there was due from him in return everything that he was capable of offering. In fact, whatever he might do in return, he could never fully satisfy the obligation to the Imperial *on*.

Much the same kind of reasoning applies to *oya-on*, or the benefits received from parents. As a student once expressed it: "When we think of all it cost our parents to educate us, all the trouble it gave them to bring us up, all the love they gave us, and all the pain we caused them in our foolish childhood, then we think that we can *never, never do enough for them*."

It is precisely this inability to pay the debt that is the mark of distinction between the two types of obligation, *gimu* and *giri*. That which is due to the Emperor and to parents falls under the *gimu* classification. There are also two other characteristics attaching to *gimu*; the obligation is universal, binding every Japanese, and it is also compulsory. The element of choice does not exist. It is interesting to note that when a word was wanted to express compulsory education (Kyoiku) *gimu* was chosen. It is known as *gimu kyoiku*.

To these obligations, due to Emperor and parents, special names are given. That due to the former is *chu*, that due to the latter, *ko*.

Chu, then, is the duty due to the Emperor and to the country in general; it includes everything that is ordinarily meant by the words "loyalty" and "patriotism".

Ko is precisely the same sense of duty, but to parents in place of the Emperor. Thus a Japanese writer stated: "In this society of superiors and inferiors the basic virtue of filial piety is identical with the sense of patriotism. Loyalty to the Emperor means an extension of loyalty to one's father. The first important phrase the child learns is *chu-ko*. *Chu* is patriotism, *ko* is filial loyalty, and they are one and inseparable" (Toro Matsumoto).

Some Japanese sociologists include a third type of duty under the *gimu* classification—the duty to one's work. This is called *nimmu*. This obligation is, in fact, part of both *chu* and *ko*; for if an individual wilfully neglects his work he is obviously failing in his duty to the country and to his parents whom he is bound to support. Conversely, one who does his very best at his job is providing for his family, which is *ko*; and at the same time efficiently filling his niche in the State organization, which is *chu*. It is undoubtedly this sense of duty to one's work which accounts for the industry of the people referred to in the last chapter; it is also to some extent due to economic pressure, but the fundamental reason is, I am convinced, this sense of duty which is so engrained as to have become a part of the character.

That the conflicting duties involved in *chu* and *ko* may sometimes involve an individual in the utmost difficulty and perplexity will be obvious. One or two examples, however, will make this clearer.

Foreigners frequently accuse the Japanese of being treacherous or untrustworthy people. There was close friendship between two students, both of whom I knew. Their families had been intimate for years and there had been intermarriage between them. The two lads grew up together, went to the same school, the same University. But whereas one remained orthodox in his political faith, the other began to veer to the left, eventually going to the extreme. They

appeared to remain friends, however, presumably avoiding the subject that stood between them. But one day the orthodox student betrayed the other to the police. He was acting according to the principle of *gimu*—it was an expression of *chu*, his duty to the State and so to the Emperor.

Thus a really intimate friendship in the western sense of the word was rarely possible among the Japanese; indeed I have been assured more than once that it was impossible, though I do not accept this. That *gimu* can easily be the cause of nerve-crashing conflicts in the home circle is readily understandable. If, for example, the eldest son is aware that his father is cheating the State by dishonestly avoiding taxation, is he to behave according to *ko* or *chu*? Of course, the former should in theory give way to the latter, but the mental struggle over such questions must be hard for the conscientious.

It is, of course, *chu* that lies behind the assassination of premiers and high government officials. While the murderers of Premier Inukai (1932) were actually on trial, the judge of the court gave a Press interview. He said: "When I read the letter in which these young men set forth the motives for their action, I was so moved by the expression of their loyalty and patriotism that the tears poured down my cheeks!"

From the Western standpoint they were just cowardly murderers—five young officers against one old and unarmed man. But in Japan it is recognized, not only that every subject has his individual *chu* direct to the Emperor, but also that he and he alone can interpret the manner in which it shall be expressed. If he can prove that this is the sole reason for his action, especially when that action involves a risk to his own life or liberty, he is, in the eyes of the people, a hero.

Before we pass on to the various types of obligation comprised in the conception of *giri*, some further clarification of the word *on*, a "favour or benefit", should be attempted.

Besides the specific types of *on* which have been mentioned, the obligations to which are collectively termed *gimu*, there is one other called *shi-no-on*, meaning the favours or benefits received from one's teacher. This takes a very high place in the Japanese mind, and it

*I would here add that in conversation the two words *gimu* and *giri* are so often interchanged that a strict classification, beyond those mentioned, is not possible. A Japanese would instantly understand by the context what was meant, but would find it extremely difficult to explain if pressed for a differentiation.*

But in addition to these four types of *on*, there is one of universal application, meaning the benefits or kindness that may be received from all whom one meets in daily life. When such a kindness is done, a definite relationship is set up between the two people. The giver becomes the recipient's *on-jin* or "favour person". This recognition of any kindness or favour is one of the pleasantest sides of the Japanese character. It is, for example, always the custom for a guest to thank his host twice, once on his departure from the house or place of entertainment, as we do, and again the first time they meet subsequently. This shows that he has not forgotten the kindness shown to him.

When anyone receives a kindness, favour or gift of some kind, he "bears an *on*" for which the verb *kaburu*, "to wear or bear on the head", is used; and so widespread is the idea that there is a saying that "everyone bears an *on*". Another significant expression is that of "being subject to" or "incurring", an *on*; here the verb *komuru* is used, as though the favour was involuntarily received. But willingly or unwillingly, once one has received an *on* there is the absolute obligation of repayment in one form or another.

The Japanese are extremely sensitive to this feeling of obligation, and it is easy to understand the weight of the ever-present burden they must carry, and which often involves them in many-sided interior conflicts.

There is an interesting and very natural consequence of this sensitiveness—an unwillingness to "bear an *on*" unnecessarily. There are quite enough incurred in the normal and well-recognized relationships of life. Thus on the principle of "not doing to others what they would not have done to themselves", a Japanese will feel unwilling to interfere in matters that do not immediately concern

him. Should he do so, he might be accused of trying to make another "bear an *on*".

One day I saw in the gutter of the road outside my garden a ten-yen note, and duly sent it to the police. A few days later I was visited by a young student, who was obviously from an extremely poor family. He offered me two yen. I was very much surprised, but on questioning him found that he was the owner of the ten-yen note. The police ruling is that the finder must be handed twenty per cent of the value of the article found. Not unnaturally I refused to accept the two yen, and was completely at a loss to account for the lad's evident discomfort at my refusal. Eventually he agreed to keep it and went away, though still unhappy. I had forced him to "bear an *on*", and had thereby shown my ignorance of good manners. Of course, at the time I was really ignorant, as I had not been more than a year in the country.

If *gimu* can give rise to such internal conflicts, *giri* is probably more actually burdensome. As has been said, *giri*, like *gimu*, is the duty or obligation to return a favour or benefit (*on*) that has been received. But there is a considerable difference between the two conceptions.

Whereas the obligations incurred under *gimu* are of universal application, are compulsory, and can never be even approximately fulfilled, those comprised under *giri* vary according to the individual, and not only can, but must be returned. They are obligations which are to be repaid with, so far as possible, the exact equivalent of the *on* received, and are therefore more personal.

It has already been shown that, as the feudal period progressed, so the one virtue that came to be more and more prized was loyalty in general, but most especially to the feudal lord. This was *giri*. The duty of the individual towards the Shogun (not, be it noted, to the Emperor) was *gimu*; but he was far too remote from the lives of ordinary citizens to affect them personally. Thus it was *giri* that became the key word in ethics. As the unrest grew, and discontent against the Bakufu increased, so the idea of *gimu* began to be directed towards the Emperor, until it became the key word of the Restorationists. But for the people in general during those

years, *giri* summed up in itself the whole duty of man to man.

The story of the forty-seven Ronin referred to earlier is a good example of the feudal distinction between the two words. The Ronin, because they entered the Daimyo's castle and killed him, had offended against the law of the State, and for this offence against *gimu* were condemned to death. But the magnificent manner in which they had demonstrated *giri*—their loyalty to their own lord—forbade their being executed as ordinary criminals. They were therefore allowed the great privilege of committing *seppuku*; and so justice was fully accomplished.

In modern Japan a slightly different shade of meaning from that of feudal days has attached itself to *giri*, particularly in the towns. It can still be translated as *duty*, but now there is the additional sense of the duty being unattractive, and being performed somewhat unwillingly because it *is* duty and therefore has to be done. This change has probably come about through the impact of modern ideas on Japanese society. These have affected the villages much less, but in the towns and cities the individual has been made to realize increasingly the severity of the sanctions imposed on him by family and public opinion. Whereas *giri* stood for the conventions, the human instincts were represented by the word *ninjo*, and as the consciousness of individuality grew, so there arose a conflict between *giri* and *ninjo*. As a result of this conflict, the idea of unwillingness, of compulsion, came to be attached to *giri*.

A Japanese colleague once came to me. It was easy to see he was worried—or at least he was not his normal self. It turned out that he had had to consent to the marriage of his daughter to one of whom he disapproved. Why did he agree to it, I asked. "I had to, because of *giri*." It is by no means uncommon in Japanese circles to hear such an expression as "he forced me with *giri*", which carries with it almost the flavour of moral blackmail, implying that because of some former incident the speaker was driven into an action which he would normally have been most unwilling to carry out. The use of this expression also shows how conscious the people are of the burdens that *giri* imposes on them.

In the villages, however, the recognition of this duty of returning favours for benefits received is the very life of the community. It is seen in the very wide interpretation given to the idea of co-operation among the village households, without which agricultural life would be impossible. For a full and most interesting account of this the reader is referred to Dr. Embree's book, *A Japanese Village* (Chapter VII). There it will be seen that there is hardly one activity of village life in which this principle is not employed. Thus in house-building, in addition to the experts necessary, others will offer their help, a man and a woman coming from each house. Food is provided throughout the day by the house-builder. Relations who come to help bring some small gift with them and in return they receive superior food. Afterwards, when all is finished, the owner of the new house will visit all who gave their help and present them with a gift called *orei* or "honourable politeness".

The most important form of co-operation in village life is exchange of labour in agricultural operations, such as rice transplanting. "In each *buraku* (hamlet) there are several houses on good terms with one another, often related, usually of about the same economic and social level. This group of houses co-operate at rice-transplanting time. They agree all to work first in one man's field, then all on the next man's, etc., until all fields have been transplanted" (*ibid*). There is the obligation of returning the benefit received in the same way and to the same extent. "Connected with all the co-operative system . . . is the obligation of a return of value for value" (*ibid*).

This "principle of reciprocity" is also seen in the exchange of gifts. Such exchanges are the rule on many different occasions, both formal and informal. As example of the former, there is the "naming ceremony" for a new-born child. All those invited bring some small gift, all of which must be returned in some recognized form; or when one is making an informal friendly call a gift will be taken—perhaps some cakes or fruit, and again something will be given in return. Moreover, Dr. Embree remarks on the strictness with which such exchanges are regarded. If the return gift is not thought to be on a level with the favour done, or equal in value to

that originally given, severe criticism is levelled at the "stingy" return. Now all this is the working of *giri* in its simplest form, and is of interest as showing what a large part it plays in Japanese village life, and how strictly the obligations are fulfilled.

It must not be thought, however, that the Japanese are ungrateful. They are very much the opposite, for they delight in the repayment of some obligations. For these they sometimes use a word implying *giri* plus *makoto* or "sincerity", the word being our old friend *chu*. It is extremely interesting and significant that for an action of loyal gratitude gladly done and from the heart, the word used should be that otherwise reserved for duty to the Emperor.

To sum up, *giri*, as employed in normal use, is a duty or obligation which a person is compelled to perform in return for a favour received, though the favour need not be something specific. Thus a former friendly association with a person may subsequently be regarded by one side or the other as involving an obligation even though an enmity had later arisen between them. The compelling force is public opinion.

There is a custom in Japan that all outstanding debts must be settled before midnight of December 31st. To do this, a debtor will go to any lengths, even to selling his household treasures and furniture. On that night the main street of Tokyo used to be packed with little booths, and it was the time of all times to pick up bargains—if one had the heart to do so. For it was sad to see the owner, perhaps some poverty-stricken petty shopkeeper haunted by ill-luck, forced to dispose of "the treasures of the poor", so infinitely precious, just for what they might fetch. But *giri* compelled.

In the days of feudalism, *giri* was also regarded as involving an obligation to protect one's reputation or honour. This idea has now died out, or has fallen so much into abeyance as hardly to be recognized. But its effect remains, and is seen in the extreme sensitiveness which the Japanese show to anything that may affect their reputation. They must never "lose face", primarily in front of others but also privately. Thus an individual may imagine himself insulted, though no one but himself has an idea of this. The thought will rankle, sometimes for years, or until he considers that by some means

or other he has had revenge, has levelled the score. The consciousness of "face"—*memboku*—is a constant preoccupation of the Japanese.

Thus one of the most difficult problems confronting a teacher in Japan is the student's fear of making mistakes. Some will remain dumb rather than risk a wrong answer to a question; they must not show that they are ignorant; they must never put themselves at a disadvantage before others—must not "lose face".

This sensitiveness over being put at a disadvantage was openly recognized in Japanese schools and sometimes even in Universities. Thus no student in elementary schools ever failed to gain promotion. In ignorance of this I once sinned grievously against the custom of a certain University. I had been asked to set an examination paper in English Literature. The papers were duly sent to me for marking, and it was immediately evident that the standard of questions had been too high, for some papers were completely blank, while others consisted of two or three lines only. On the mark list, therefore, appeared a succession of zeros.

What a commotion there was! What could be done? The problem was thus solved. I set a second paper which was much easier; I marked the papers by grades, A, B, C, etc., and left the Japanese college authorities to interpret the letters as they would. So all were satisfied and *all the students passed*. I must, however, in fairness state that this is not the normal practice in higher education!

This need of "face saving" enters into all professional life. A doctor could never admit ignorance of a disease or a mistake in diagnosis. A request for a second opinion is not well received, except, of course, among those who have travelled or who are at the head of their profession. Similarly a teacher must not admit ignorance, or a business man confess that his campaign was a failure. Thus a criticism of work is taken as a personal criticism of its author, so closely are the two identified.

It must of course be understood that, although I am here attempting to analyse the mental and psychic processes of the Japanese, they themselves do not carry out any such analysis. All they know is that, should they "lose face", they would feel shame, and in

certain cases that feeling dictates a course of action such as alone will remove the discomfort of their emotion. They must somehow obtain satisfaction. To this a Japanese is compelled, not merely by the pain he himself experiences, but by the pressure of public opinion. Were it generally known to his associates that he had been humiliated or insulted and was prepared to let the matter slide, he would no longer be regarded as a man of honour. It will be realized, therefore, what an extremely hard path lies before the Japanese Christian who tries to put into practice the Christian precepts of forgiveness and forbearance.

The late Dr. Nitobe, in his widely read book *Bushido or The Soul of Japan*, wrote as follows: "In revenge there is something which satisfies one's sense of justice. Our sense of revenge is as exact as our mathematical faculty, and, until both terms of the equation are satisfied, we cannot get over the sense of something undone."

The passage is important as showing the Japanese feeling that retaliation should be so far as possible in exact proportion to the wrong inflicted, as well as to the sense of a duty left undone.

An understanding of this Japanese mode of thinking is of immense importance at the present time. For just as an insult or humiliation, received by an individual, may be felt by all his family and his associates or group—and most certainly will be if he received it as its representative—so, too, what is regarded as an insult or humiliation received by the country, by Japan, is looked on as affecting every Japanese.

In this connection there is a further consideration. Though the humiliated person must have satisfaction, yet he need not set about it at once. He can wait for a suitable opportunity; but should he do so, the shame increases "like the scar of a tree which enlarges as the tree grows", and so an insult, slight in itself, becomes extremely great.

This way of thinking, applied to political incidents of the past, shows them in an unusual and interesting light, i.e. they are seen from the Japanese angle. There was first the arrival of the "Black Ships" with Perry—to the Japanese an act of unprovoked aggression and interference. The visit must be returned, but only when it

could be done in such a way as to repay it in the same manner and with the accumulated interest. Perry arrived without warning, and his guns destroyed shipping and whatever harbour installations there might be, besides causing casualties. In the same unexpected manner, Japanese 'planes and ships arrived at Pearl Harbour; shipping was sunk and harbour installations destroyed; many casualties were caused. The balance was restored.

Here the intense propaganda campaign conducted throughout Japan for the ten years previous to the Pearl Harbour attack must be remembered, as also the Exclusion Act of the U.S.A. and the non-renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

To attempt to persuade any Japanese that Japan committed an act of aggression is just waste of time. In accordance with their own ethical code, they levelled the score, and to do so was a virtuous act. How, then, can it be expected that in this connection they should have any sense of guilt? Guilt of what? Truly no nation could be so well equipped psychologically to wage war as was Japan—and that not merely without a sense of guilt, but rather with one of virtue!

In the preservation of "face" is also included the duty of observing all social proprieties, such as showing proper respect to associates and superiors, living according to one's station in life and especially controlling the emotions so that they shall not be inappropriately displayed—in short, the proper fulfilment of all social responsibilities: good manners.

This insistence on emotional control is of very ancient origin, and may have first arisen as a self-protective instinct of the herd. But it was strengthened by Chinese influence, under which improper display of the emotions was recognized as something "not done" by anyone of culture. Much practised as this self-control was by the upper class, the masses, by natural imitation of those above them, included it as an integral part of correct behaviour.

In respect of this particular branch of correct behaviour, its observance is more strictly required as one goes up in the social scale. But though the general expressions of etiquette may differ according to the social position of individuals, its obligations are common to all.

It is only when an attempt has been made, as here, to analyse the Japanese system of obligations, that one can begin to grasp the formalism of the code, and the exactions that it makes on everyone. In my own view, it is singularly symptomatic of that "youness" in the character, due to the interrupted development of the nation. In the West we try to regulate our lives on some general principle of virtue, such as goodwill, kindness or justice, each perhaps a little vague and varying in its interpretation according to our upbringing, environment and cultural standard. It is left to each one to act on these principles to the best of his ability, and, should he fall short, he is certainly not conscious of humiliation, disgrace, ignominy or crime ! He is, in short regarded as a responsible individual, capable of choosing for himself, on general principles, the correct behaviour. If he manifestly succeeds he is called a "man of principle".

But evidently in Japan it is necessary for a definite and formal system of obligations to be laid down, by the fulfilment of which alone can the life of society be regulated. The element of choice is, so far as possible, and in regard to external behaviour, eliminated. Unfortunately, the very rigidity and compelling force of these *external* obligations makes the exercise of that power of choice *within* infinitely more burdensome and more wearing; and gives rise to distressing conflicts and complexes. Thus in Japanese drama generally, as in the plots of novels and in historical plays, the crucial situation constantly turns on such conflicts as "his *gimu* was this, but his *giri* was to do the opposite", "it was *chu* against *ko*", and so forth.

But I think it will be admitted that if we in the West, by our own will, acted up to the principles we profess to be guided by as scrupulously as the Japanese fulfil their obligations under the goad of external sanctions, the world would be a much more comfortable place to live in!

XIV

AMBIGUITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS

THERE is a certain Japanese word which, by its constant appearance in the Press, and its use in conversation and discussion, arouses in the Westerner more emotional reaction than any other. It is the word *makoto*, translated by "sincerity". It may produce annoyance, or amusement, or contempt, or exasperation, according to the circumstances in which it is employed, but it very, very rarely produces understanding. This is particularly unfortunate, for it is another immensely important key word, which helps to unlock the seeming mysteries of Japanese mentality. It is also peculiarly characteristic of the feudal heritage that persists so strongly in the character.

To the Englishman or American, it always seems that the term "sincere" is only applied by a Japanese to one who agrees with him, or accepts his demands. Thus, during those fateful months immediately preceding the outbreak of the War, when the Press was full of the reported conversations between the U.S.A. and Japan, the main accusation levelled against Washington by the Japanese was of "insincerity". When, previous to 1937, Tokyo was presenting Nanking with impossible demands and terms—China was "insincere".

If a member of the Diet makes a speech the tone of which is disapproved by the majority of those present, he "lacks sincerity", or, in other words, he has "insulted" the Diet. On the other hand, no higher praise can be given by a Japanese than to say that someone has acted "with sincerity"—with *makoto*.

How does a Japanese interpret this ubiquitous and extremely potent word?

In the first place, the word "sincerity" as a translation for *makoto* conveys quite the wrong impression to the Western mind. When

the occasions of its use are examined, it will be found that it would be more reasonably interpreted by the word "consistency". Consistency with what? With that particular ethical code which supplies the standard to which every Japanese must try to attain. Put it in another way: to the Japanese mind, that man is sincere who speaks or behaves in a manner consistent with the code which he regards as binding on himself.

Here it is most important to remember that in Japan there is no acceptance of what is regarded throughout the Western world as a universally approved code of morals. Lying, murder, and sexual indulgence are not thought of as being necessarily wrong in themselves. The quality of an act is determined by the circumstances in which it is performed. This will be discussed in some detail later, but it is here mentioned in order to emphasize that the code which is followed by a Japanese is, in most of its provisions, applicable to Japan only; but as it is what the native has been taught to accept as that handed down through centuries of ancestral forebears, he not unnaturally assumes it to be the best possible, and therefore the most acceptable to all. We, too, assume that people of other lands regulate their conduct on approximately the same code as our own, an assumption which is responsible for no little misunderstanding between some other countries and ourselves!

It appears odd to us that the Japanese should assume that their code is accepted everywhere, as it is so localized; but to them it no doubt seems quite reasonable. Thus, in the particular case of the demands on China, the working of the Japanese mind would be something as follows:

"We are the recognized leaders of the East. Owing to our divine mission we are destined to be the leaders of the world. The demands we have made are for your own good, which of course you really recognize in your heart of hearts, as much as we do. If you do not accept them, you are not acting honestly with us, for your words are not consistent with what you know to be the truth. You are insincere."

It is the sublime conviction of their own rectitude, which, they assume, must be obvious to all, that makes the Japanese

interpretation of *makoto* so difficult for us to grasp. Once it is realized, many problems are on the way to being solved.

The implications of *makoto* are extremely far-reaching, as it enters into almost all social and business activities. A student, whose ability to speak English was very elementary, went to one of my colleagues to ask to be coached, as he wished to give a recitation at some meeting. What was he thinking of reciting? *The Ancient Mariner*, by "Mr. Coruridge". My friend evidently treated the applicant rather as a joke, and laughingly suggested that if he wanted to recite at all he might try something very much more simple. The young man was furious and came to me. He had been sneered at, humiliated—"Professor Blank was insincere".

The boy had, of course, assumed that his request would be treated in the same spirit as that in which it was made. To laugh at it was "insincerity". Everyone, from the highest to the lowest, is entitled to having proper respect shown to him. To fail in this is "insincerity".

Thus an individual shows his "sincerity" by strict observance of the rules of etiquette, and the careful inculcation of this accounts for the excellent manners and politeness of the Japanese, remarked on even by their enemies.

Because, however, such formalism in etiquette is foreign to the customs and ideas of Western countries—particularly to those of the U.S.A. and Britain—nationals of these countries often regard such an exhibition as either humiliating or insincere (foreign interpretation!). In actual fact it is the reverse. The Japanese scrupulously fulfils the formal requirements of etiquette because they are compulsory by his code. It is a matter of pride—of his honour. Also the virtue of "sincerity" (Japanese interpretation) requires the external gesture to be the reflection of the respect which again, according to the code, is due from him to everyone, but especially to his superiors.

It is not, of course, to be imagined that every Japanese fulfils the requirements of his moral code to the fullest extent. The Japanese vary in the practice of "virtue", as do the people of other countries. But in Japan the degree of conformity is probably higher than in the West for this reason—that they live far more in public than we do,

and hence are to a much greater extent exposed to the sanctions of public opinion.

Among those most frequently accused of being "insincere"—of lacking *makoto*—were the members of the Zaibatsu, that group of powerful financial families which together practically controlled the commercial life of the country. Had they used their undoubted financial genius only to further the interests of the country, they would never have been subject to criticism. But because they were considered to be working for their own self-interest rather than for that of Japan, they had no "sincerity". This concept is doubtless due to an extension of the "herd" discipline, in which the energy of the individual must be devoted only to the welfare of the "herd". So in Japan obvious self-seeking, even in the most insignificant affairs of private life, is condemned as showing "lack of sincerity".

From this it can be understood what the Japanese mean when they accuse other nations of being "insincere". It is not an accusation of dishonesty, of dissembling or hypocrisy. On the one hand it is an indictment of self-aggrandisement—that their policy is dictated solely by self-interest; on the other, it charges them with not acting towards Japan in the way that a Japanese considers obligatory; in plain words, not showing her that respect which is her due!

This *makoto* is necessary in the cultivation of all the virtues prescribed in the Japanese code. Count Okuma, one of the very greatest statesmen of the Meiji era, writes: "*Makoto* is the precept of all precepts; the foundation of moral teachings can be implied in that one word." And again: "Our ancient vocabulary is void of ethical terms except for one solitary word, *makoto*."¹

In view, therefore, of the paramount position that the word and all that it enshrines hold in Japanese ethics, its potentiality is immense. In the past it has constituted a definite danger, in that its interpretation has rested on a national code so narrow and egoistic in outlook as to reduce it to an absurdity from an international point of view. But with the widening of the Japanese outlook under the

¹ *Fifty Years of New Japan*, by Count Okuma. He was Japan's leading figure during the latter years of the Emperor Meiji. His reputation as a statesman is equalled by his fame as an educationalist. He was the founder of Waseda University, now the largest and most famous in Japan.

tremendous stimuli which the people are now experiencing, the word will, it may be hoped, become attached to that code of morality which is universal in its application, and by means of which alone nations and their peoples can live and thrive together in mutual trust and understanding.

It will, I think, be generally agreed that the Japanese ethical code, so far as it has been described, is not merely narrow; it also makes what would be, to us, almost intolerable demands on those who try to follow it. Of course, to the individual Japanese who has been brought up under it, it will obviously be less burdensome. Yet to carry out its precepts and to fulfil its obligations must needs imply considerable self-discipline, and many and rigorous are the means by which this is attained.

In examining the Japanese attitude towards the primary, natural pleasures of life, such as food, sleep, warmth, sex and so forth, it is striking to see how it has developed from subservience to the group, with the resultant cramping of individuality. Thus Japanese writers and national leaders constantly condemn what in the West is regarded as the normal objective of life for each individual, the *pursuit of happiness*. To this they oppose such ideals as "loyalty", "duty", and "discipline"; all, be it noted, virtues essential to group survival. If, in striving after these, the individual attain "happiness", well and good; but if not, it is of no importance.

It might be thought from this that a visitor to Japan would find a race of dour, hard-visaged, puritanical-looking people, with rarely a smile among them; of course nothing is further from the truth. If ever there was a blithe, cheerful race, it is the Japanese.

"A brave, courteous, lighthearted, pleasure-loving people," is the description of W. G. Aston.¹ The indulgence of the flesh is not in the least thought of as an evil in itself. On the contrary, it is good if indulged in as it should be—that is, at the right time. And the right time is only when it does not interfere with the carrying out of the obligations and duties of life which are incumbent on all. For these the flesh must be ruthlessly sacrificed. There is nothing

¹ *A History of Japanese Literature.*

wrong in the gratification of the five senses, but woe betide the man who allows them to come between himself and his duty.

In pre-war days "Cherry blossom viewing parties" used to be the vogue. A group of friends, perhaps twenty or more, would set forth on an evening when the moon was high. Work was over, and they would let themselves go in a real emotional orgy. They would provide themselves with plenty of *o-sake*, and gradually the still night air would become hideous with the sound of maudlin sentimental singing and raucous, drunken laughter. Foreigners would be disgusted at such an exhibition, but they did not know the exceedingly vigorous and disciplined lives of the revellers, the tremendous emotional relief experienced, and the temporary escape from the severity of daily life. Of course, the more refined took such pleasures in a manner suited to their cultural environment, but in every case there would be a letting-go, a relaxation which was recognized and thoroughly approved.

The place that the hot bath holds in Japanese life is well known. Throughout the land, even in the small, out-of-the-way villages, there will be a public bath—generally in the local *Yadoya* or inn. The temperature is usually about 108° or 109°. It is often used by both sexes together. The custom doubtless originated in the practice of "cleansing from defilement", which played so important a part in primitive Shinto. For centuries it has been *the* great relaxation of the day, when all work is over; it takes the place of the "club", where the neighbours gather together to gossip and chat and thoroughly enjoy themselves. The Japanese love warmth and all the comfort that it gives. Yet one of the chief virtues, in their view, is to endure cold unnecessarily. The "winter exercises" of young men who, in the flimsiest covering, take a night or early-morning run, to end up under a waterfall, have already been mentioned. Children learning calligraphy are praised when, on a bitter day, they write till they can no longer move their half-frozen fingers. For the same purpose of hardening the pupils, elementary schools are unheated.

A similar view is taken in regard to sleep, at which the Japanese are the most accomplished adepts. They can sleep at any time in

any position, even surrounded by noise and clatter. They are, of course, accustomed to falling asleep amidst the noise of conversation, owing to the flimsy construction of the Japanese house. A European, when he first tries to sleep in a Japanese hotel, separated by a paper door from a singing party in the next room, ceases to wonder at the ease with which the native of the country can drop off into the deepest slumber at any time and in any circumstances. But for the Japanese to deny themselves sleep is considered highly meritorious. One of the standard Army practices is to make troops do some military exercise extending over two days and nights without a wink of sleep. Students, on the approach of an examination, will work up to three or four in the morning and attend the nine o'clock lecture, and will continue to do this for at least two weeks before the examination starts. It is not because they are behindhand in their study, but because they must leave no stone unturned towards success. They could not endure the reproach of their families, or their own self-reproach, should they subsequently fail.

A young man was staying in my house the week before a most important examination. He was extremely brilliant, and there was not the smallest necessity for him to do any work at all. Being a mere European, and therefore thinking I knew much better than he did, I begged him to come away with me into the country for a complete rest, and so start the examination full of energy. To my suggestion he gave the curt rejoinder: "You don't understand the Japanese!" and he sat up over his books every night up to three a.m. Of course he passed with consummate ease.

The same kind of discipline is often imposed in regard to food. The Japanese love a long-drawn-out meal. Frequently have I sat on the *tatami* in a private room of some restaurant for over two hours, growing stiffer and stiffer! The courses are brought in on tiny little saucers, hardly more than a couple of mouthfuls in each, and taken up with the *o-hash*i, "chopsticks", in small portions; at intervals they are interspersed with talk and the sipping of *o-sake* out of tiny cups. In such circumstances eating is almost ritualized, and thoroughly enjoyed. But in ordinary everyday life, eating is a business to be got through without delay. Students bring their lunch

with them to school. It is brought in a little tin box about five inches by three inches in size, containing rice squashed down and a couple of pickles—also two wooden *o-hashhi*. This “boxed” lunch is called *o-bento*. They eat it strolling around or squatting in a corner, and finish it as *quickly as possible*. “Eating is not regarded as an act of any importance. Eating is necessary to sustain life and therefore it should be as brief a business as possible.”¹

One of the maxims most quoted to Japanese youth is: “If you are hungry behave like a Samurai and hold a toothpick between your teeth.”² I have actually seen this done in the case of a very poor student whose family simply could not afford to give him his *o-bento*. Sooner than admit his family’s poverty he swaggered around among his school-mates sucking his toothpick ! It was through this incident that I first came to make his acquaintance. He is now my very intimate friend.

The indulgence of the sex instinct falls into the same category, and there is perhaps no department of Japanese life so much misunderstood by the foreigner. There exists, it appears, quite extraordinary prudery, side by side with every facility for licentiousness. Two short stories will illustrate the former. A certain widely-travelled and extremely wealthy business man owned a highclass restaurant in Tokyo. He was a great lover of Art, and his hobby was collecting from different countries the most perfect replicas of old Greek and Roman sculpture he could find. On one occasion he had brought back from the U.S.A. an exquisite replica of the Venus di Medici in marble, and decided to place it on a recessed dais in the restaurant. Suitable hangings and special concealed lighting were arranged, and it was duly exhibited. It happened that a high official of the Metropolitan Police came as a guest to the restaurant. A few days later the owner was summoned to the police station and told that he must either remove, or *drape*, the statue and so conceal its nakedness. The police could not allow the morals of the public to be corrupted !

Some years since, a representative soft-ball base-ball team from

¹ K. Nohara, *The True Face of Japan*.

² So as to give those around the impression that a good meal has just been finished.

the Women's Colleges of the U.S.A. paid a visit to Japan to give a series of exhibition games. They played a preliminary practice game among themselves at which the police were present. The players were wearing *very* short shorts ! The manager was duly informed officially that his team would never be allowed to play in public unless the shorts were lowered sufficiently to cover the knees ! After much discussion, a compromise was agreed on. The offending shorts were let down a couple of inches !

Yet alongside this seemingly ridiculous puritanism, there are such institutions as Yoshiwara and the Geisha system—not to mention the unpleasant and sometimes horribly crude, but widely-spread advertisements for cures of venereal disease, as also for contraceptive devices. How does all this fall into line ?

To start with, there is no condemnation of sex gratification as such, but it must take its proper place in the normal conduct of life. That is, it must never be allowed to interfere with the sterner business of fulfilling one's duty and obligations. No one is more despised than the wanton *roué*. This is well shown in the incident of "the forty-seven Ronin". Their chief, Oishi Kuranosuké, in order to mislead the spies of Kotsuké-no-Suké, deliberately led a life of debauchery, actually going so far as to divorce his wife. One day he fell down drunk and helpless in a street of Yoshiwara. Another Samurai came by, who knew him to have been a retainer of Asano no Kami, and thinking that debauchery had made him faithless to his duty of revenge, deliberately spat upon him. When later he learned the truth, he went to the tombs of the forty-seven, and there himself committed *hara-kiri* in expiation of his unjust judgment ; which is why there are now forty-eight tombstones.

Sexual indulgence, as has been said, is not condemned in itself ; neither would the average Japanese man feel that such indulgence involved any marital infidelity. A wife is there to bear children and so to fulfil the duty to the ancestors. She is to look after the house and do the housekeeping and bring up the children.

In the vast majority of cases, individual choice does not enter into the business of marriage. John F. Embree, in his most interesting book, *A Japanese Village*, notes that of birth, marriage

and death, "only marriage can be controlled by a villager, and it is controlled to the greatest possible degree" through the sanctions imposed by the communal and family systems. (See Part I.)

It would, however, be the greatest mistake to imagine that the sex instinct is manifested only in the gratification of lust or the desire for offspring. Romantic love plays an important, and sometimes most disturbing, part in Japanese life, as may be deduced from the large place it occupies in their literature. Such incidents as those described in Hearn's grim story "The Red Bridal"¹ are by no means uncommon. In this, a village youth and maiden deeply love each other. Her stepmother, for the sake of gain, arranges for her to be married to an elderly but rich old man, known and hated for his avarice. The young lovers slip away by night, and lay themselves down on the railway line just before the Tokyo express is due to pass. They die in each other's arms.

Romantic love is so well recognized as a disruptive force that in the old days its existence between a man and his wife was cited as one of the possible reasons for a divorce. Within the hierarchical organization of the family system, any undue favour or distinction shown to the young wife might easily cause grave trouble among the rest. Therefore, because of its tremendous power as a source of disturbance and perhaps dislocation of the normal family life, romantic love has so far as possible been purposely separated from it.

Cases are indeed known where a husband will bring his concubine to his house, introduce her to his wife, and expect the latter to wait upon her. But such cases are exceedingly rare, undoubtedly because they are whole-heartedly condemned by public opinion. Yet the wife would not feel she had any ground for objection to her husband setting up a separate establishment. What is important is that the two aspects of sexual manifestation should be kept quite apart.

There can be no doubt that, among educated Japanese women, the standard of sexual purity is extremely high. It is, however, true that among the peasantry the sexual side of life is much more freely discussed between women than it is in the more sophisticated atmosphere of the cities.

¹ In *Out of the East*.

Extremely broad anecdotes, leaving nothing to the imagination, are well received, while openly sexual dances are performed by the village women at parties and feasts. "Some good housewife will take the floor and perform a dance, jerking her hips forward to the refrain of some very free verses. These performances invariably bring roars of laughter."¹

But this is a very different thing from actual extra-marital sexual intercourse by the wife, which is, in normal circumstances, definitely condemned. In certain cases such repression leads to grave mental disorders and nervous crises. In some villages, however, well off the beaten track, such extra-marital intercourse takes place during annual festivals which are clearly the survival of a primitive Fertility Cult. Such a festival was once described to me in very vivid detail. The day, fixed well beforehand, is eagerly awaited. The god is represented by a thinly disguised phallic symbol which is enthroned on a car. The shrine stands at the head of the village street, on either side of which are the usual small shops for the sale of goods. On this day they are emptied of all merchandise and put at the disposal of the "public".

The festival lasts throughout the day, accompanied by theatrical shows, jugglers, games, and, above all, dances which, as evening approaches, become ever more wild and orgiastic. Much *shochu*² is consumed, and the excitement rises to a climax as darkness falls. All the little shops are lighted up and the "god" is moved into his shrine. At that moment the lights are extinguished and couples pair off as they will. Any children born of such unions are absorbed into the village community. No stigma of any kind attaches to anyone concerned.

This strikingly bears out my assertion that in the Japanese view sexual indulgence is not wrong in itself. It is the expression of a powerful natural instinct which is wrong only if it is permitted to interfere with the proper fulfilment of duty.

But in the towns and cities, where duties and obligations are naturally more numerous and rigorous than in the countryside, the

¹ John F. Embree, *A Japanese Village*.

² *Shochu* : the cheapest and strongest "brand" of *o-sake*.

standard of chastity among Japanese girls and women used to be very high. This holds good for all save the very lowest classes.

It was, therefore, with no little horror and with real distress that I read a report from Tokyo in the Press,¹ which stated that in that city alone, owing to the occupation, no less than fourteen thousand illegitimate births were to be expected. This was followed a few weeks later by another report, which, after stating that in the month of April the suicide rate for Tokyo had increased to eight times the normal, went on to say that deaths among women mostly concern young girls of marriageable age who are "*beset with numerous problems*". Comment is superfluous. But what a lesson on the benefits of democracy and Western culture !

Before we close this account of Japanese views on the gratification of the flesh in general, a word should be added in regard to the geisha system. In the Japanese mind, the geisha is poles apart from the inmate of Yoshiwara. Traditionally she is not available for sexual enjoyment, but is regarded simply in the light of an entertainer. In fact, the owner of a geisha house had *le droit du seigneur*, while a special girl might, at the request of an extremely wealthy and respected client, be reserved for his own exclusive use. There have, indeed, been cases of marriage resulting from such incidents.

In the small country towns, however, the geisha are little more than superior prostitutes. The only difference is that they possess the accomplishments necessary for entertaining, and therefore the services required of them are not necessarily of a sexual nature. But that they are available in the latter capacity is, unfortunately, a fact.

None the less, the accepted tradition is that the profession of the true geisha does not imply sexual activities.

Psychologically, this fact shows the desire of the Japanese to separate romantic love from sexual gratification on the one hand, and, on the other, from the institution of marriage. Each occupies a different department in social life. They may be experienced concurrently, but they should never overlap.

¹ *News of the World*.

From all that has been written above, it might at first be thought that the mere fact that his code permits fleshly relaxation as perfectly legitimate at the proper time and in the proper circumstances would make it easier for a Japanese to live an average "good life" than it is for a European with his absolute distinction between right and wrong. Actually the reverse is the case. For the Japanese code both forbids and permits the same things. You may not gratify your senses, but, if you think the time is suitable, here are the means to gratify them. You must not tell a lie, but, if you do not lie in certain circumstances, you are insincere.

The onus of deciding when gratification may be safely indulged rests on the individual, who, throughout his upbringing, is taught to suppress his individuality. The code is extremely exacting, both positively and negatively; it is formal and narrow, while submission to its laws is enforced by the most powerful of sanctions—public opinion.

All this obviously requires constant watchfulness on the part of the individual. So long as his environment is normal—that to which he has been accustomed—he feels safe and therefore at ease. The moment any unforeseen element enters that environment he is on guard. Who, with any experience of the Japanese, has not noticed this in ordinary social intercourse? The conversation runs on happily until perhaps you mention something that may have a possible remote flavour of, for example, politics. Instantaneously all facial expression is wiped out. The answers are utterly non-committal, and if you persist, you very soon hear "And now I must take my leave!"

In regard to the expression of emotion in general, it is by no means always forbidden, for, as was said above, the Japanese are a very gay, happy people who take their pleasures with delightful abandon. But in certain set circumstances there must be no outward sign of inward feelings, particularly before superiors, lest it should cause one's companions discomfort. It is not seemly to do so.

I can never forget a visit I paid to the widowed mother of a young student who had died suddenly. I had visited the house before. The boy, eighteen years old, had been the only son, and was the very

centre of the world to his mother. On this visit she, his grandmother, and an uncle were present. After I had paid my respects before the family shrine where the lad's photograph was placed, we sat talking of him for a few minutes. The mother spoke with all her usual charm, smiled cheerfully, and even joined in the ripple of laughter caused by some remark made by her brother. There was not the slightest vestige of sorrow. But her heart was breaking; she fell ill the following day, and a week later had joined her boy. Knowing all that I did, I could hardly bear such an exhibition of self-control and almost superhuman courage. Yet such behaviour, far from being unusual, is normal.

Another example is of interest, as showing an occasion when the expression of emotion was quite "the thing". The final rugger match in the University league had been played. The result was forty-five points to three. After so colossal a defeat, I went down to the changing room to condole with the losing fifteen, most of whom I knew personally and well. Fine husky lads they were, too, their average age being about twenty-one.

I was stopped at the door—they were too upset and might not like to see me. However, I looked in. Most of them were seated on the lockers round the room, tears rolling down their cheeks, sobbing like little children ! This was quite proper, for it showed the correct spirit—the shame they felt over defeat !

The rule that emotional control must be specially observed when dealing with superiors is a particular instance of a general principle that in the fulfilment of obligations the burden rests on the inferior, and is offered to—not commanded by—the superior. It is a natural result of the survival of the herd instinct, strengthened by feudal custom. Unless born to it, no Japanese likes to be in a position where he can issue commands. To avoid this, ingenious mechanisms have been devised. Committees, family and village councils, and all such consultative gatherings, must come to a unanimous decision; there is, too, the curious dual control system of Japan where the one enjoys the title and the honour attaching to it, while the other exercises the real authority. There is a definite dislike of holding responsibility, which undoubtedly accounts for the frequent and

often confusing changes of those members of the staff who hold positions of authority, both in Government Departments and in business offices.

The extreme contrast that exists between Western and Japanese views on the purpose of life can perhaps be more easily understood if one compares their war propaganda, particularly their films. In those of the West, the triumphant conclusion is the climax. There will be perhaps a very short scene of a Pacific island ripped to pieces with blasting shells, and corpses lying around in horribly grotesque attitudes. The next scene will be a long one of the same spot, army huts erected, the flag flying, roads made; the "march of victory" displaying order, homeliness and comfort, and the activities of peace after storm.

The Japanese film will mount from horror to horror, *ending up* with troops, filthy, wounded and exhausted, bivouacking in the mud and swamp of the jungle with a bedraggled Rising Sun flag stuck into a stump.

What is stressed is the joy of overcoming difficulties and obstacles, in the fulfilment of duty; for it is *that* which has so tremendous an effect on the minds of the audience.

In the West it is the pacifist who would show the unrelieved horrors of war, as a deterrent. Were he to show them to a Japanese audience, they would rush to enlist !

XV

“LIFE IS EARNEST”

IT IS OBVIOUS that, in order to satisfy the demands of the Japanese code, much discipline is required. At the same time, it must be remembered that, whereas the Japanese custom of living in public makes it impossible to act contrary to the code and remain undetected, it is, for this very reason, a help. The strength of the group mentality is likewise an assistance. To do what everyone else is doing all around you is less difficult than to do the same thing alone. Therefore the Japanese takes to his self-discipline as part of his normal life, and though at times he certainly finds it burdensome, it is probably less so than a foreigner might think.

This training through self-discipline applies to women as well as men, and is extremely varied. The word in general use for self-discipline is *shūyō*, which is the abbreviation of *seishin shūyō*—spiritual culture, or training. In Japan its aim is, as might be expected, quite different from what it would be elsewhere. In other countries, self-discipline is imposed with some such object as the control of the passions, or the conquest of desire; and Japan having been so strongly influenced by Buddhism, this latter motive might have been anticipated. But it has nothing to do with the matter. Self-discipline is cultivated simply so that one may attain perfect efficiency, and so carry out the practical requirements of daily life as well as possible.

There can be no doubt, however, that the idea itself—the attainment of efficiency through mental discipline—is due to the influence of Buddhism, and particularly of the Zen sect. But the motive is characteristically Japanese. In order fully to understand the vast difference between the original teaching of Buddhism in this respect and its interpretation by the Japanese mind, a brief outline of the former must be given.

Buddhism reached Japan from India, via China and Korea. During its long sojourn in China, its doctrines were inevitably influenced by Chinese philosophy; but it was with regard to interpretation of terms and methods of approach that this influence was chiefly felt. The fundamental motive—the obtaining of release from the bonds of existence through Union with the All—was never questioned. The Sanscrit word for Union is *Yoga*.¹ “The initial objective of Yoga is the unification of man’s manifold nature. By reason of the identification of his consciousness with his psychic nature or personal self—‘a thing of shreds and patches’ built by desire and self-will—man has lost his sense of that One Absolute Existence which he essentially *is*.”²

The all-inclusiveness of Buddhist philosophy is shown by the provision of different “paths” or methods of training suited to different temperaments. The main “paths” are *Jnana Yoga*, the way of the intellect, of understanding; *Bhakti Yoga*, the way of devotion, of an all-embracing love which reaches the depths of pure compassion and the heights of joy; *Karma Yoga*, the way of action, of the application of eternal laws and principles to the service of mankind; *Hatha Yoga*, the way through extreme physical culture and control. Finally, there is *Raja Yoga*, the “Royal Path”, which is a combination of the first three.

Whatever the method chosen, the motive of the training remains the same for all: the enlightenment of mankind through attainment of Union with the one—or the All.

The chief means by which this result is to be achieved is by meditation, by the training of the mind.

It has been the almost unanimous opinion of various writers, both native and foreign, that the Japanese in general seem incapable of metaphysical speculation, and show little, if any, interest in mystical philosophy and kindred pursuits. This may partly be owing to the strong survival of the *kami* conception, in which the human and the divine overlap and combine, so that—intellectually—there is felt to be no marked difference between the two worlds. This largely accounts for the fact that the original Buddhist discipline,

¹ Yoga—pronounced to rhyme with “vogue”, the “a” being silent.

² Claude Bragdon, *An Introduction to Yoga*.

with its highly spiritual motive, is now applied to worldly and material success.

Whatever be the cause, it is certain that the importance of deliberate mental training as a means of self-culture and self-improvement was the result of Buddhist teaching, spread by the monks, in whose hands, it will be remembered, pre-Meiji education rested. During the Tokugawa period, the Zen sect strongly emphasized meditation as a means towards efficiency.

Among the more advanced monks within the monasteries, the motive was, and is, the attainment of mental efficiency for spiritual ends; but there can be little doubt that the Shogun, realizing the immense value of such discipline for the improvement of the people in the practical things of life, encouraged its dissemination for that purpose with all the weight of his authority.

I have already described in Part I how widely the Zen doctrine and technique were practised by the Samurai class, and how they spread among the people by imitation. But the motive of this mind training and development was wholly changed from its original conception. There was no longer the pure and spiritual motive of desiring to help mankind, or of working for the enlightenment of the world. In place of the high aim of service to others, self was substituted. This must be regarded as one of the causes of the introversion so prevalent among the Japanese.

If I seem to stress this question of motive overmuch, it is because I believe that the deliberate adaptation of spiritual things to worldly purposes has to some extent been responsible for the parlous condition of the Japanese to-day. It is, I suggest, no mere coincidence that the militarists who have brought their country to such disaster were the leaders of the very group who adopted the Zen technique of meditation as a part of the daily routine.

In mind development, "Purity of motive is of paramount importance, for the slightest trace of selfishness and vanity is apt to grow with lightning speed".¹

Among those who have adopted the monastic life within the Zen monasteries there is no question as to purity of motive. It is only

¹ From *Concentration and Meditation*, The Buddhist Lodge, London.

when the teachings are brought into contact with the world that they become perverted in their aim.

My own contact with Zen Buddhism came through a certain retired admiral of the Japanese Navy. He was one of the very best types of old Japanese stock, of pure Samurai lineage. But he believed that everyone should be a master of some kind of handicraft, and his eldest son was apprenticed to a famous swordsmith. The admiral had been a Zen devotee since boyhood, and the daily meditation was an essential part of the discipline he imposed on every member of the family. Both he and his son would go “into retreat” at a certain Zen monastery, to the abbot of which I was introduced. I then discovered what a large part the meditation discipline plays in the life of the Japanese intelligentsia, even though the majority of those who practise it have little or no formal connection with any monastery.

Zen is unique in many ways, and specially in its use of *koan*. “A *koan* is a word, phrase or saying which has certain qualities, the most important being that it defies intellectual analysis, and thereby enables the user to burst the fetters of intellectual thoughts.”¹

Three examples of *koan* are:

- (1) “What was your original face before your parents were born?”
- (2) “When I pass over the bridge the water flows not, but the bridge flows.”
- (3) “What is the sound of one hand clapping?”

The object of a *koan* is “to work up (in the disciple) an ever increasing pressure of ‘searching and contriving’ which leads in time to intellectual bankruptcy. Then, when the process of thought can go no further, the student must summon the courage to abandon all, ‘leap over the precipice’ and find in the death of thought the birth of enlightenment. The process of ‘letting go’ is essential.”²

There are degrees of difficulty in the *koan*, and Dr. Suzuki, the

¹ *Concentration and Meditation*, The Buddhist Lodge, London.

² *Ibid.*

greatest authority and exponent of Zen, has made an attempt to classify them, the easiest *koan* being within the range of any student who grasps their purpose. But he says that Zen meditation calls for an "iron determination and indomitable will",¹ and few can attain the state of mind—*muga*—in which a *koan* is solved without an effort that exhausts the personality. A famous master of Zen said: "Unless you have been thoroughly drenched in perspiration you cannot expect to see a palace of pearls on a blade of grass."² From this maxim has doubtless arisen an expression sometimes heard in regard to one who is completely, utterly absorbed in what he is doing: he is said to have "the sweat of *muga*".

This training to acquire *muga* is practised to a greater or lesser extent by a large number of Japanese. Students will spend a week or ten days "in retreat" in a Zen monastery, or go through a special course in their homes before an examination.

The practice of using *koan* as an element in mental discipline and development was introduced from China, and it is interesting to note that there it has long since been given up. But in Japan it has not only survived but has been elaborated, showing clearly that it fulfils a great need in Japanese life.

Remembering what has been written in regard to the contradictions that must often arise between conflicting obligations, it is reasonable to suppose that the practice of *koan* in some way helps the individual to solve problems which, without some such training, would seem to him insoluble.

Thus, in any attempt to unravel a *koan*, the mind is brought to a dead end. It then—in theory—makes the plunge, and the solution is clear: enlightenment is achieved. So it is possible to judge the frequency of the mental difficulties, problems, and contradictions that occur in the daily life of many Japanese, by the popularity of this Zen technique in mind training.

It must not, of course, be thought that all Japanese undergo this particular form of self-discipline, but it is quite common among students and teachers, as also among the professional classes. In

¹ *Essays on Zen Buddhism.*

² *Ibid.*

the Army cadet schools it is regarded as a precious heritage from the warriors of the Bakufu, and is almost part of the routine of training.

Self-discipline among women takes a much gentler, even pleasant, form. Such disciplines are “the tea ceremony” and “flower arrangement”, for both of which Zen Buddhism was responsible. The origin of the former is thus described by Dr. Anesaki: “Tea was believed to be a calming beverage and used by the Zennists for preventing commotion or sleepiness during the meditative session. Through the wide spread of the Zen practice (in the thirteenth century) tea became an indispensable drink in daily life, and special tea gatherings were organized by men trained in Zen, for exchanging free talks and enjoying the quiet surroundings of the tea room, which was built specially for the purpose. It was tiny, like a primitive hut, and as simple as the wild forest . . . a little chapel dedicated to the cult of serenity and simple beauty. The tea gathering, often called ceremony, held in this chapel has left its traces in every phase of Japanese life.”

As the centuries passed definite “schools” arose, differing in minor details of the “ceremony”. The utensils were specially designed—simplicity being the keynote in everything. They are often of quite exquisite beauty, and the guests’ quiet, almost reverential admiration of them is part of the ordinary etiquette.

The training of the hostess—for now the practice is confined to women—may take years. It is part of the curriculum in every girls’ high school. Every movement, every gesture is studied, even to the position of the fingers whether in motion or at rest, until all can be done with a gentle rhythmic continuity that is a joy to watch. If ever the maxim *ars est celare artem* has been observed, it is in the tea ceremony. The object, of course, is to induce a mood of perfect tranquillity of mind, perfect poise coupled with alertness. No foreign woman—at least such is my belief—can ever attain the marvellous grace of slow motion that is seen in the Japanese hostess. In the gardens of the well-to-do there is almost always the little hut specially reserved for the “ceremony”, and it is a great occasion when the eldest daughter first takes her mother’s place there as hostess. To be present at one of these “tea gatherings” is not only

a great privilege, but it affords one an insight into a side of Japanese life that one cannot find elsewhere. It also makes the visitor understand the degree of discipline that has been undergone before such proficiency can be attained. There can be no question that such discipline, though its immediate aim is the beautiful performance of a certain ceremony, must affect the whole character, and this indeed is its purpose—to produce, amid the vicissitudes of life, a calm and gentle poise, a mind unruffled, undisturbed; a self-control that nothing can overcome. Has it succeeded in that purpose? Remembering that the tea ceremony is practically confined to women of the upper and middle classes, I will answer the question by a passage from Lafcadio Hearn, with which, so far as my own experience goes, I am in whole-hearted agreement.

“By ancient custom (the Japanese woman) is not permitted to display her grace in the street; she must walk in a particular shrinking manner, turning her feet inwards as she patters along upon her wooden sandals. But to watch her at home where she is free to be comely—merely to see her performing any household duty, or waiting upon guests, or arranging flowers, or playing with her children, is an education in Far Eastern aesthetics for whoever has the head and the heart to learn. . . . She is in all her ways incomparably graceful; her every motion, gesture or expression being, in its own oriental manner, a perfect thing, an act performed, or a look conferred in the most easy, the most graceful, the most modest way possible.”¹

What has always struck me personally, in the far too few contacts I was privileged to make, was the almost invariable presence of three qualities—gentleness, patience and courage. Japanese women have much to face in life, and their training certainly equips them for it.

“Flower arrangement” is another type of self-discipline. This again was a Buddhist introduction, and, as with the “tea ceremony”, it has become a highly formalized and complex act with many different schools. The object of each system seemed simple enough—the display of sprays and leaves of flowers and shrubs in the most beautiful manner possible, following the irregular graces of nature

¹ L. Hearn, *Japan. An Interpretation.*

herself. In general, the material is arranged in three “stages”, though that hardly expresses the idea. The top part of the arrangement represents the Divine, the Good, the Spirit; the lowest is the world, things material; between is humanity, the soul of man. This symbolism is worked out in all the combinations of colour, shape, texture and design. The finished product—there are seldom more than four or five different “sprays” used—is marked by a wonderful simplicity, and is the result of hours of careful work. It is not surprising to learn that to become an adept takes years of training, years of discipline.

Many and varied are the different forms of *shūgō*, discipline that the Japanese impose upon themselves to fit them for the arduous business of life. Some are pleasant, as has been shown; some exceedingly severe. But in no case are they taken up in a spirit of asceticism. They are simply “hardening” processes, to enlarge life, to increase efficiency in the fulfilment of duty. The immense part that this idea plays in Japanese life may be judged by those domestic dramas which make the most appeal, on the stage and at the cinema.

The heroes or heroines have to meet obstacle after obstacle; they are baulked in their designs over and over again, and frustrated in every possible way. But they overcome it all. That is why they are heroes or heroines! They may die in agony—lovers may be separated for ever—the plot may, and often does, end on a note of extreme tragedy. But duty has been fulfilled, in spite of all, and the audience go away thrilled. Evil is the lack of strength to live up to the prescribed code; or, more accurately, instead of evil, there are varying degrees of falling short of one’s duty. It is important to note also that the virtuous do not have to be rewarded. Why should they be, seeing that they have only done what was their duty!

It does not often happen that a flagrant failure to live up to the code occurs—or perhaps it would be more true to say, is discovered. But if it does come to light, the offender is not likely to be so careless, or so undutiful, a second time; at least not if he is treated as was a certain offender known to me.

I had been asked to deliver a special series of lectures at one of

the cadet colleges. One morning I happened to notice that among the students was one who seemed to be trying to conceal himself at the back of the class. On seeing him at close quarters I was horrified to find that he was barely recognizable. One eye was completely closed: the other almost. The nose was "spread abroad"; it was, I subsequently heard, broken. The lips were barely distinguishable as such. At first I thought he had had some frightful accident, for when I addressed him he could only stand with difficulty. However, incredible though it may seem, he appeared quite cheerful, and the rest of his class took it as a huge joke. I was informed he had been "punished". It appeared that he had allowed his passions to overcome his sense of duty and had slipped out of college at night to visit an *inamorata*. It was a boarding college, as are all cadet schools. He had been caught coming in and, by order of the Principal, had been handed over to the senior class for disciplinary action. There were forty members in that class, all young men of about twenty-three years of age, in the hardest condition. All, first individually, then *en masse*, had beaten him up, till he dropped unconscious. It was the herd turning on a weak member. To record my disgust I walked out of the class, to the great joy of its members, who merely thought I was another "mad European". The young man had offended against *gimu*. He had failed in his *nimmu* obligation—that to his work: and hence in both *chu* and *ko*—his duty to the Emperor and his parents. There was nothing wrong in the act itself. He could have paid any number of visits in the vacation. As it was, he had failed in his duty.

XVI

EASING THE STRAIN

THOUGH the exactions of the Japanese code have in general resulted in the suppression of individuality and aspiration, it would be a mistake to think that all are affected to the same degree. Just as there have occurred communal risings against authority, such as the many rice riots during the first ten years of Meiji (approximately 1868-78), so have there been many individuals who have rebelled against the conventions.

The experiences of these misfits, these round pegs in square holes, have almost all been of the same kind. At first exposed to the strong disapproval of family and communal authority, they gradually, through their perseverance and insistence on their own development, come to be regarded as eccentrics, and are allowed to go their own way. But the path of such people is thorny in the extreme, and the fact of their existence in considerable numbers points to the strength of character that is potential in the Japanese. It is natural that among this class are to be found many exponents of the Arts—poets, writers, painters and actors. Others are ex-University students from the countryside, who after graduation find the life of their village far too narrow and constrained. Of such, Dr. Embree writes:

“. . . the most striking type of misfit is an individualist. The commonest solution for such a man is to emigrate. To-day most of the cases of men who did not “get along” have gone to Manchuria . . . a man with a University education does not fit into the *mura* (village) patterns.”¹

Now that all possibility of emigration is denied such people, this question of adjustment is likely to give rise to many extremely complex problems, and may be a source of serious unrest. It is fairly certain that those who have hitherto been regarded as misfits are those of the strongest personalities, and from their ranks will

¹ *A Japanese Village.*

probably come the future leaders of the various movements which will undoubtedly arise. The position, however, is complicated by another factor. It is not merely that the possibility of emigration for these young individualists is no longer open; it is that their numbers will be enormously increased by the Allied policy of enforced repatriation of Japanese overseas, who had formerly settled in "enemy" countries or in the colonies of Formosa and Korea. Thus we are told that from the latter country many Japanese civilians are being repatriated, some after an absence of twenty-five years. They had expected to spend their lives in Korea. Now they are being sent back to a country where they have no home, no belongings, and where very few will want to know them.

It is to be hoped that this angle of the question has not been overlooked by the Allied authorities, for it is likely to cause, not only much suffering, but also great social confusion and upheaval. For a very large proportion of these returning "settlers" originally left in search of that freedom of expression and action which was denied them at home. They were tired of being constantly urged to "watch their step"—*jicho suru*—whenever they expressed by word or deed something not quite in accordance with the accepted code.

This word *jicho* is full of significance. It is almost invariably used with the auxiliary verb *suru*—"to do, make, or act". When standing alone, it is usually translated as "self-restraint" or "self-respect". It is made up of two characters, *ji* meaning "self" and *cho* "heavy", and therefore theoretically implies a personality of solidity, who acts on well-established principles; as opposed to one that is *keihaku*, "light and shallow". In actual use, however, it carries precisely those implications that are contained in our word "respectability".

Jicho shinakereba narimasen—"you must *jicho*"—is the expression above all others which resounds in the ears of those who would behave in any manner not quite in accordance with custom. "You must be careful of your reputation"—"You must not lose face"—"You must not expose yourself to ridicule"—all these are implied in that constantly recurring phrase of warning or rebuke.

But whatever the burden of maintaining this "respectability"—and it must indeed be burdensome—the individual, especially if he

is young, knows that if he fails in doing so he will suffer far more. Not only will he incur the danger of being laughed at, that terrifying sanction of public ridicule, but he will lose the approval of others, with the possible result of his own group turning on him and exacting punishment, as was the case of the young cadet of the last chapter.

The result of a code requiring such a constant strain on the attention—even when allowance is made for the alleviating effects of habit and custom—is a psychic exhaustion which shows itself in fits of boredom amounting at times to deep depression and sometimes ending in true melancholia. I have also noticed that this depression varies in accordance with the intellectual ability of the individual. The better the brain the deeper is the depression, and it is one of the most difficult conditions to combat. It must indeed be reckoned as one of the commonest causes of suicide among students. When they are in this state, some form of excitement is needed to bring them out of it. This partly accounts for the extreme popularity of the cinema, which so many use as an escape from the severities of life. It accounts, too, for what is so noticeable a characteristic of the Japanese—their love of novelty, and the weariness that so quickly ensues. In fact, the unceasing pressure of sanctions external to themselves, combined with the suppression of individuality, has resulted in a fundamental weakness of personal will, which seriously impairs their power of “sticking to things” on their own initiative.

This emptiness, this feeling of boredom and frustration, is practically confined to the educated classes. Among the peasantry life is too physically hard; moreover the local festival days give them the excitement for which they crave, for though these days do not in general go to the lengths of those described in a previous chapter, they are far more unrestrained than those of the city.

The need for excitement, for something new, for some cause or principle, is seen not only on the individual level but in the nation as a whole. By suggestion and propaganda something becomes the fashion, and the people flock after it like sheep. From 1930 onwards this fashion was “The Showa Restoration”, whose object was to restore Japan to her past, truly Japanese, greatness. Everything that savoured of the West was anathema. Even on railway stations,

the name in English was expunged, and only that in Japanese left. The annihilation of "the West" was carried to the most ridiculous lengths. Patriotism, militarism, war! But once the excitement is over, there is a reaction equal in strength to the original emotional urge. So for many months after the surrender the outstanding feature among the people was apathy. There was, quite naturally, a revolt against militarism, but in addition there was a dull indifference, the reaction to the previous years of excitement.

The fundamental reason for this instability lies in the extreme emotionalism of the Japanese character, coupled with the rigid suppression imposed by the code. It is a grave weakness which will take years to eliminate.

As soon as one has some knowledge of the language, one begins to see interesting proofs of this vague consciousness of the difficulties of life which oppresses so many Japanese. Words are the outward and audible sounds of an inward, invisible thought or idea. Thus, by noting the frequency with which certain words recur in ordinary conversation, a foreigner will be able to get some idea of the way in which the people around him are thinking. To analyse Japanese mentality by this method would, of course, require a long and deep study by groups of learned and experienced scholars. But here I would confine myself to one or two examples of what I may term "softening words"—those that indicate the desire to soften the rigours of the code, to "cushion" contacts, to leaven dangers and avoid conflicts.

The first of these words is *benri*¹ which is normally and correctly translated as "convenient". It is one of the very first words a foreigner learns, and if he remains in the country he will find it cropping up in all sorts of connections throughout his stay.

Now when the use of this word is analysed, when the many occasions on which it is applied are compared, it will be found that it refers to the immediately obvious, the superficial. This obsession with the superficial is emphatically one of the most striking of Japanese characteristics. It largely accounts for their reputation for adaptability

¹ For these representative expressions I am indebted to two short articles on "The Japanese Mind" by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Heaslett which appeared in the *Spectator* of April 13th and July 6th, 1945.

—a reputation that is quite justified. But such adaptability applies only to what is on the surface. I was once expressing to the German conductor of the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra my admiration of the way these young Japanese had learnt to play Western instruments sufficiently well to perform some of the great orchestral classics. He agreed, but added that the number of those who had any real appreciation or knowledge of music as an *Art* was infinitesimal. Their mechanical technique was quite good, and that was all.

Sometimes this obsession with the superficial aspect of things may have disastrous effects. The following story was told me by one who was personally concerned. The Government imported a British made aeroplane with a Rolls Royce engine. Of course it arrived with its own experts. In order that the engine might be thoroughly examined, it was taken down and all its workings explained with the greatest care to the Japanese engineers. It is obvious that an engine of so superb a quality as the Rolls can only be the result of the most meticulously accurate and painstaking work in every smallest detail. Each component part is so designed as to ensure perfect co-ordination with all the rest. One maladjustment and the whole is affected. There was one particular item in the design that to the Japanese was not sufficiently *benri*. The visiting expert explained its function, the engine was re-assembled and the plane taken out on test flights. It performed perfectly. The experts went home to England. The engine was again dismantled and the particular element changed to make it more *benri*. It was re-assembled and taken out for another test flight. It crashed and all the five on board were killed. An extreme case, into which, besides the *benri* complex, there entered the Japanese conceit. But though extreme it is typical.

It may be questioned how far this obsession with the surface of things is a perversion of the same instinct which we see expressed in Japanese art. Critics have constantly noted the Japanese artist's amazing faculty for observing nature—a faculty in which he far surpasses anything that the West can show, and which in this respect puts his work above that of the Chinese. But they also affirm that the productions of the latter show greater depth, and an insight into the spiritual aspect of nature which is lacking in the Japanese masters.

Certain it is, in any case, that in the ordinary affairs of life the Japanese live on the surface of things. All that is asked of any new idea or thing is "is it convenient?" In the production of goods for the commercial market they do not ask "Will this last?" or "Is this the best we can produce?" The question does not occur to them. Rather is it: "Will this do?" It is this outlook which floods the markets of the world with gimcrack goods possessing charming *surface* finish, or decoration, but which will often fall to pieces at a touch.

The same mentality puts up a flimsy stucco façade on a wooden shanty, so that from the front it seems a solid concrete building. Life is hard enough as it is: why add to its difficulties by delving beneath the surface?

Another word which shows the desire to soften the austerities of existence is *dakyo*, normally translated as "compromise", though in reality it represents the idea of "mutual concessions". Just as there is no clear-cut distinction in the Japanese mind between human and divine, so the same kind of confusion exists over other concepts which in Western thought are clearly separated. Thus the Japanese draw no sharp line between justice and injustice, between legal and illegal, or indeed as has been shown, between right and wrong.

I was once told of a lawsuit concerning a matter of ten thousand yen which had been borrowed on certain terms. These terms had not been kept by the borrower. The Japanese judge ordered the payment in full, but the plaintiff received only nine thousand yen, the defendant one thousand! This was *dakyo*. To the sum of one thousand yen a special name is given. It is called *namidakin* or "tear money", and is in fact a sort of consolation prize—something to soften the blow. Innumerable are the occasions in life on which the principle of *dakyo* is applied—all with the idea of easing the difficulty or hardship that would otherwise be experienced.

It is probable that the exigencies of the code as it relates to others would lead to many situations of great embarrassment, were it not for certain mechanisms of avoidance that have been evolved. As an illustration of this, let me quote an expression that is in frequent use. It is *tomawashi ni iu*, which means "to speak in a roundabout way". So much is this method of "insinuating" the normal custom,

that to approach a subject abruptly, or without a gentle leading up, is simply bad manners. For instance, an acquaintance once called on me. The conversation was something as follows:

"Will you please explain the meaning of Romanticism?"

Answer attempted.

"Is there any difference between a Catholic Christian and a Protestant?"

Another attempt.

"What is the best camera I can buy for fifty yen?"

From this dislike of the direct approach there developed the institution of *nakōdo*, the go-between, without whose services Japanese social intercourse would be almost hopelessly handicapped. Whenever any situation arises between two people which might cause the slightest embarrassment, the *nakōdo* is called in. My neighbour's loudspeaker is never silent: I employ a *nakōdo*, who for a small fee—the same *orei* referred to formerly—will settle the matter amicably. No marriage is ever arranged without a go-between—sometimes two, one for each of the families concerned. In great affairs as well as the trifling incidents of daily life, the *nakōdo* is ubiquitous, which shows how anxiously the Japanese always tries to avoid situations of embarrassment, or occasions of possible disagreement and subsequent quarrel.

Another expression whose "softening" character is perhaps not quite so obvious, is *yumei mujitsu*, which means "having the name but not the reality". The obvious example of this principle in action was the relation between the Emperor and the Shogunate up to 1868. The former had the name of ruler, but the Shogun ruled in reality. It is a principle that still functions in every department of Japanese life; in none so much as within the family, where the custom of adoption is so widespread.

The following incident came to my knowledge. A young man of highly aristocratic descent wished to marry a young girl who was much below him in the social scale. She was otherwise all that could be desired. So an equally aristocratic friend of the young man's family adopted her. She thereby became of equal rank, and the difficulty was surmounted. Both in Government affairs and in

business, *yumei mujitsu* is in constant use. An importunate enquirer can easily be thwarted by being referred to someone who has the title of authority without the reality, and back again to the real wielder of power, who does not appear to have any. It is a case of Spenlow and Jorkins carried to extremes. But it is a trouble-avoiding mechanism of considerable value.

There are many other such words and phrases which could be cited as showing the Japanese endeavour to make life easier. This very endeavour betrays their consciousness of the perplexities and arduousness of the code to which they are subject.

It is to be expected that those who impose a strict discipline on themselves will be over-anxious to see that their neighbours are equally zealous. So in Japan there are innumerable societies—altogether apart from official methods of surveillance—which assure that their members keep to the straight and narrow path of duty. The psychic irritation this produces must be enormous, and it certainly accounts for the criticism by one member of a family, of the others. Naturally such criticism is only made among intimate friends, but it is frequent and sometimes bitter. Often it comes from a younger brother in regard to his elder; sometimes it is against the father. It is at such times, in my experience, that it is the most severe. Never, however, have I heard anything but the deepest affection and respect expressed towards the mother. Yet this criticism does not mean that the family itself suffers any detraction. To each it is the pivot of his world, and though there are increasing signs that the excellence of the family *system* is being called into question, such doubts have not affected the status of the family itself.

Another well-known characteristic of those who require much of themselves is self-righteousness, a defect which the Japanese display in its most extreme form. Not that other nations are altogether immune from this; after all there is little to choose between a claim to belong to "the land of the gods" or to "God's own country!" But perhaps it is the plurality of ownership that makes the former claimants so sublimely certain of their superiority. Japan bases her claim on her own virtues, and her anger with China at not accepting her pre-war demands was because she felt her virtues were not

appreciated. Her aim to establish a co-prosperity sphere was not merely propaganda. She truly considered that only under her wing and guidance could peace, order and prosperity come to the Far East. For the Chinese and other nationals of occupied countries to doubt her protestations of virtue and altruism was to suspect her motives, and therefore a colossal insult. The degree which Japan's self-righteousness reached is well seen in the following passages from a booklet by Professor Fujisawa. The fact that he is widely travelled, can converse comfortably in six languages, and is extremely well read and highly cultured, makes it all the more striking. The booklet, published in Tokyo in 1942, is called: *The Great Shinto Purification Festival, and the Divine Mission of Nippon*.

The author first points out that in the Rescript of 1939: "our gracious Tenno (the Emperor) proclaimed solemnly that the causes of great justice should be extended to the far end of the earth, so as to turn the world into one household." This shows "the character of our Divine Sovereign ever anxious to act as the head of an all-embracing universal family". The objective of Japan's divine mission is "to permeate the whole earth with one cosmic vitality embodied in our Divine Sovereign".

The Emperor is mystically called not *Tenno*, but *Sumera Mikoto* who "embodied in himself the infinite cosmic Life Centre. . . . Without *Sumera Mikoto* no nations of the world would have ever come into existence. . . . Should any perverse nation dare to obstruct *Sumera Mikoto* in the carrying out of his celestial undertaking he will resort, though reluctantly, to arms for the purpose of constraining that nation to come back to the right path. . . . It is just as a mother chastises her naughty child into obedience. . . *Sumera Mikoto* offers his fervent prayers before the awe-inspiring shrine in the Imperial Palace in order that the world, torn asunder into warring camps, may be brought back into tranquillity and peace. Obviously none is better qualified than *Sumera Mikoto* to accomplish this divine work of saving humanity."

Finally: "The objective of *O-Hakai* (the Purification ceremony) is to purge the world of all human impurities. *Sumera Mikoto*, keenly conscious as he is of his responsibility for the sins and impurities of

all the peoples of the world, and wishing to sweep them away on their behalf, (performs) this austere religious act (by which) not only Japanese, but the entire Universe will be completely purified.”

This document officially summarizes what *was* the real though vague conviction of perhaps seventy per cent of the Japanese, and it therefore can be readily understood that the refusal of other nations to accept this “mother love” concept, came as a very real shock to the Japanese Armies. Coupled with the Japanese emotional instability, this largely accounts for—though it does not for a moment excuse—such horrors as the “Rape of Nanking”.

Japan, then, founds her claim to unique greatness on her superior and unique virtues, which, originally possessed intensively by the Emperor, have permeated the land and the people. “. . . The Insignia of the throne¹ symbolized the virtues of veracity, mercy and discrimination (justice) respectively. . . . These virtues are a national inheritance embodied in the reign of the Imperial Family and in the life of loyal subjects; this morality is not a mere theory or teaching but a living fact of national life.”² So, in the announcement of victories, the communiqué would frequently start: “Due to the Imperial virtues . . .” or “Inspired by the virtue of our divine Tenno, our invincible armies etc. . . .”

The “virtues” together form the Japanese spirit *Nihon seishin*—words of tremendous import. Their very vagueness renders their manifestation possible in innumerable shapes and activities. Germany based her superiority on physical strength, on material power. But in the case of Japan, her spiritual superiority can show itself in a multitude of ways. Defeat cannot puncture *that* balloon. Many a time during the War when the factory workers were being urged to produce more planes, they were told, “It is not necessary for you to equal the production of the enemy. Owing to our spiritual superiority one Japanese pilot equals at least five Americans. So even if you produce one to their five planes, we are equal. But produce two and victory is assured.”

It has already been shown why it is just wishful thinking to expect

¹ The Sword, the Mirror and the Jewel.

² Dr. Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion*.

the Japanese people to feel guilty in regard to the War. Defeat has not affected *seishin*. The Emperor was "betrayed" by his advisers, and so it was natural that the inspiring potentiality of *seishin* should be temporarily weakened. Now in the new Japan it will manifest itself in a new and altogether different way. It remains a powerful element to be reckoned with.

How far the Emperor's denial of his own divinity in his New Year's Rescript (1945) will affect this conception, it is difficult to estimate. My own view is that it will make very little difference, at any rate for a long time to come. I have not seen the original Japanese text of his declaration, but the published translation of the relevant passage was as follows:

"The ties between us and our people have always been based on mutual trust and affection. They do not depend on mere legends and myths. They do not derive from the false conception that the Emperor is divine. . . ."

By this the "virtues of the Emperor", the source of *Nihon seishin*, are unaffected; and it will be argued that the disaster which has overtaken the land was due to evil counsel offered to the Emperor by his advisers who alone were responsible.

There are two other words somewhat akin to *Nihon seishin*, and probably more familiar to Western ears. They are *Yamato damashii*, and *Bushido*.

The difference between *Nihon seishin* and *Yamato damashii*, "the spirit of Yamato", is very subtle. As explained to me by a Japanese scholar, it would seem that *Yamato damashii* signifies something that is eternal in the Japanese character—the spiritual essence of every individual, which he possesses in right of being a Japanese. No one but a Japanese therefore could possess *Yamato damashii*. *Nihon seishin* on the other hand has a more temporal signification. The degree in which it is possessed may vary in different people; it can also be acquired, and so it is theoretically possible for a foreigner who truly loves Japan and her people to be imbued with *Nihon seishin*; but he could never possess *Yamato damashii*.

In feudal days and earlier, the exemplars of *Yamato damashii* were the Buke and the Samurai class. The term therefore is in more

general use among the militarists ; in which connection I had a somewhat uncomfortable experience. I was in a beer-hall of Tokyo with a Japanese friend. At the next table was a rather talkative, slightly elevated, soldier in uniform. Having finished our pints, my friend and I got up to leave. Suddenly the soldier jumped up and, standing directly in front of me, said—in a very aggressive tone—“D’you know *Yamato damashii* ?” Before I could utter a word he shouted : “This is *Yamato damashii*,” and drawing his bayonet gave me a prod in the “middle” ! Fortunately I was wearing a heavy overcoat ; equally fortunately my friend was quite able to deal with the situation. He at once said in a very quiet but commanding voice :

“D’you know that this gentleman is a Colonel in his country’s Army ?”

Immediately the aggressor snapped back his bayonet, clicked his heels together and gave me a smart salute !

Bushido as a word dates from the early twentieth century. As an idea it means, “The way of the Bushi (knight).” It was the ideal code of conduct by which the Samurai was supposed to regulate his life. It corresponds to the idea of chivalry, and was *Nihon seishin* with special application to the warriors of the feudal ages.

A little thought will show that *Nihon seishin* is a force that can be used to great profit in the new Japan, if only it can be directed into the right channels. It is not easy for the foreigner, accustomed as he is to a clear distinction between right and wrong, to see how the same “force” can be applied to aggression at one moment, and the pursuit of peaceful and healthy ideals at the next. But the people who most revere the Emperor will be the very ones to murder his highest representatives—because they are fully possessed of the “Japanese spirit”, *Nihon seishin*. Once some understanding of the Japanese code has been gained—that code to which they live up with so striking an intensity—the situational quality of its application will be clear, and it will be realized that, instead of the Japanese acting in apparent defiance of all logic, their conduct is in fact regulated with a precision equal to, and sometimes greater than, our own.

After all that has been said of the immense influence that the “herd instinct” wields in Japan, it is a little surprising to find the importance that is attached to “responsibility”, *sekinin*. The word

is used in much the same way as in the West, but in Japan it carries a heavier load, due to that very "herd instinct". The guilty person is called in so many words "the responsible fellow"—*sekinin-sha*—and his wrongdoing will involve his whole immediate group in paying the cost. But it frequently happens that the person who would be considered guilty in the West is not in fact the *sekinin-sha*. It is the head of the group who is the *sekinin-sha*. Thus, should there be disorder in a University lecture-room and a window be broken, the *sekinin-sha* will be the head of the class, the monitor, and not the individual who actually did the breaking.

This principle governs all official life. If there is a students' strike, the Principal of the College must resign. When a part of the Emperor's Palace was burnt in the raid on Tokyo, the head of the Imperial Household Department, Matsudaira Tsuneo, resigned. Similarly in pre-war days, if any incident affecting the Emperor occurred through the supposed carelessness of the administration, the Premier with his Cabinet had immediately to resign.

This conception of responsibility attaching essentially to the head of the group is clearly an extension of that which belongs to the head of the family.

That such responsibility is felt to be a burden is shown by the custom, where family matters are concerned, of only reaching important decisions by consultation. Thus the onus of decision is felt to be shared.

But if responsibility automatically attaches to the head of the group, why, it may be asked, is the Emperor, often actually referred to as the Father of his people, not considered responsible for the present disaster that has fallen upon them? Because he is unique. His "fatherhood" is spiritual and is therefore not applicable to temporal things. For these he must depend on his advisers. This idea is, of course, attacked by the Communists, which is why they alone demand the Emperor's arraignment as a war-criminal.

However, this consciousness of "responsibility" generally, and its particular interpretation among the Japanese, is an asset which, if rightly understood and properly utilized, can be of considerable assistance to the Allied authorities.

XVII

RECONSTRUCTION: THE PROBLEM OUTLINED

I SAID before that when the mind and psychology of the Japanese had been analysed, it might perhaps be found that their behaviour did not, in actual fact, differ very much from our own. It would seem that hitherto I have been trying to show how completely different it is ! Yet I still stick on the whole to my original affirmation ; though of course, between Western behaviour and Japanese, there are certain marked differences. Where these occur, they are due to the strong development of the herd instinct in Japan, and the almost mechanical rigidity of the code.

In actual fact, if we act up to our principles, we do carry out the obligations so much insisted on by the Japanese. There is no specified *on* that we receive from our country or our parents, yet we behave, and rightly, as though there were. The very essence of Patriotism and Loyalty implies the payment of an inexhaustible debt. Can any limit be put to the gratitude due to parental love and care ? We affirm that our principles lay down a hard and fast line between right and wrong. But in actual life do they ? To avenge an insult is with us no virtue. But not so long ago, the refusal to fight a duel after being insulted would have caused us to be ostracized by our friends. The sanction of public opinion is still one of some force. In our relations with others, we often use a go-between to cushion the contact. We do not always agree with every stranger we meet. But even if in complete disagreement, we are either politely non-committal, or we word our disagreement in such a way as not to cause him—or ourselves—discomfort.

The Japanese dislike of accepting a favour from a stranger, or of conferring a favour on someone not intimately known to them, for fear of receiving or imposing an unwanted *on*, is reproduced in our fear of “ putting another under an obligation ”, and of being “ placed

under an obligation" ourselves. In the former case we hesitate to "hurt his pride", and in the latter we feel it a reflection on "our own independence". It is only the rigour of the Japanese code in making the repayment of an *on* obligatory that causes the difference between their conception and our own.

Nor is the West any stranger to the principle of *yumei meijitsu*. Are there not still firms and business houses whose chief is only a figurehead, the real power and authority resting on the head of a manager or secretary?

Again, in the field of international relations, do we not expect other nations to take our own protestations of virtuous motives at their face value? But it must be admitted that when they refuse to do so, our criticism goes somewhat further than an accusation of "insincerity"!

Even in that dislike of the stranger, that limitation of altruism to the particular group, which has resulted from the "family system" in Japan, have we not all met the individual who "keeps himself to himself"? A visitor who had not been to England for twenty years would, I think, be struck by the increase of selfishness shown in public relations. In these days a young man will extremely rarely give up his seat in tube or train to an elderly woman *unless he knows her*. In this country it is a striking fact that as the political theory of socialism has increased, public manners have so much deteriorated.

It is true that in the West we do not feel that the delinquency of the individual—except in very grave matters—affects the family or the group to the same degree as do the Japanese. Perhaps it might be better if we did. But we continually speak of a person "disgracing his Regiment", "being a disgrace to his School or College", a "dishonour to his class", and so forth.

But it is in the question of self-discipline that there is, in my opinion, so interesting a parallel. In the West it is essentially those with strong religious convictions who practise it. They say their daily prayers, make their daily meditations, set apart some days for fasts, others for the observance of special abstinence in food. With what object? For the attainment of an *all-round efficiency*. They believe that only when the rules of the spiritual life are observed can

the practical life be fully lived. That they are correct in their reasoning will be confirmed by any unbiased observer who has had the good fortune to number such people among his friends and acquaintances; and this leads us to the conclusion that in reality the code which exacts so much from the Japanese is, in fact, a "religious" code, which is why its observance is carried out with "religious exactitude".

In short, the points of similarity between us and the Japanese are many more than are the points of difference. What has to be remembered is that what we in the West do sometimes and in certain circumstances, the Japanese tend to do all the time and in all circumstances. They will *always* conceal their emotion in front of a guest or acquaintance; they will *always* repay what they are taught to consider an obligation; they will *always* make use of a "cushion" to soften delicate contacts; they will *always* adjust their moral behaviour to circumstances and situations; they *always* move in fear of public opinion. For this, of course, the persistence of the herd instinct is responsible. As this decreases and the sense of individual value evolves, so naturally the rigidity of the code will soften; its observance will become less universal, and less obligatory.

But it is of vital importance to remember that in our own case, the evolution of that co-operative individualism which is the basis of real democracy, is the result of centuries of very gradual training and experiment. Any attempt to hasten the process in Japan is bound to lead to disaster.

As I see it, this is the great danger, applicable to every stage and department in Japan's reconstruction—the danger of going too fast, of those in power trying to force the pace. There may be also another tendency equally dangerous, or perhaps even more so; the tendency of the occupying authorities to impose their own customs and ideas on the Japanese people, regardless of the latter's own culture. In so many reports on Japanese affairs which have appeared in the American Press, there has been evident a tone of superiority, a general atmosphere of *de haut en bas*, which cannot but cause apprehension to those with any knowledge of Japan, and who have her interests at heart.

In this connection the Japanese Minister of Education in a speech welcoming the American Education Mission on March 8th, 1946,¹ made two significant and very pertinent observations. The first was:

"The tendency to democratize our national life which is what you are requiring of us, seems to be sweeping all over the country with a great deal of noise and journalism. In the mad reactions against wartime hardships and restraints placed on freedom, the people are now rushing from one extreme to another, and are facing the danger of falling into either a state of vacuity or anarchy".

In the second he said :

"America as a victorious nation, is in a position to do anything it pleases with Japan. I hope America may not avail herself of this position to impose upon us simply what is characteristic of America and Europe. . . . If this is so I fear we will never have a true Japanese education. There are some young idealists among the Americans coming to Japan who tend to use it as a kind of laboratory in a rash attempt to experiment in it on abstract ideals of their own which are not yet even realized in their own country. While the Japanese should open-mindedly accept all the advice given to them and should effect a radical reform in their education, you will agree that the Japanese people should do it on the basis of their own conscience and criticism."

Which leads us to a consideration of the unique relationship into which Japan and the U.S.A. have been brought—that of Pupil and Teacher.

It would seem that, did events follow their normal course, the position should be reversed ! For while Japan is perhaps the oldest of nations, taking the word as representing a homogeneous unit bound together by common ancestry, religion and customs, the history of the U.S.A. only occupies some 300 years. The one is a storehouse of tradition dating back more than a thousand years, while the other is in process of forming her tradition. Each nation is unique after its own kind, and each is tremendously conscious of its uniqueness. It is not an easy situation. What tact must be

¹ As reported in the *New York Times* of March 9th.

shown by the teacher, what allowances made by the pupil if everything is to run smoothly! It is the admirable display of tact by General MacArthur which has so much endeared him personally to the hearts of the Japanese, and which has been the chief reason why the Occupation has gone so smoothly and, up to the present, so successfully. He is an idealist, vividly conscious of a mission.

This relationship that has now come into being between the U.S.A. and Japan is the most intimate that can exist. In this particular case the circumstances are peculiarly favourable, for the pupil is as anxious to learn as the teacher is to instruct. The success therefore of this "educational course" depends on two factors—the type of lessons that are taught, and the way they are taught; particularly the latter. Furthermore, every true teacher knows that he has very often as much to learn from his pupils as they have from him—though in a totally different way. It is just this process of give and take, this interchange of values, that is the characteristic of successful education. The fact that two nations, each so utterly different from the other in almost every way, should have been brought together in so close, so intimate a relationship, is, I am convinced, no mere accident.

Looking back on Japanese history, from 1854 onwards, there can be no doubt at all that one of the main reasons for Japan's failure to realize the essentials of Western democracy, and for her remaining content with superficial resemblances, was the speed with which her own government tried to force those foreign ideas on to the people. The national leaders hoped to effect in fifty or sixty years what should take a hundred and sixty. They evidently failed to realize the importance of that rule or law on which depends all success in international collective imitation; namely, that it must proceed from within, outwards.

"The ideas and sentiments of a people are first imitated by another, and not until they have become widely spread and established, are the forms in which they are so externalized, or expressed and embodied, imitated also. Thus in the imitation of British parliamentary institutions by other nations . . . it is not until this assimilation of ideas has passed beyond the stage of fashion, and

they have become a part of the national tradition, that effective imitation of the institution itself is possible."¹ If a new tradition is imposed upon a people by external authority alone, it will break down hopelessly.

Real parliamentary government must develop from within, first from a growing sense of individual rights and privileges, then from village councils with the *gradual* adoption of such elements as free speech, election by secret ballot, voting, and the rest of the machinery of democratic government. District, municipal and local councils must form an essential part of the life of a country before it can be expected to govern itself through the parliamentary organization, practice and procedure.

It will be observed that the whole process of development must start from a *growing* sense of individual rights and privileges, and such growth is a matter of time, especially among a people in whom the herd instinct is still predominant.

It is, indeed, the persistence of this instinct which largely accounts for those characteristics of Japanese society that differentiate it from Western communities.

To it is traceable the power of the family and the communal group to mould the life of the individual; as also the group mentality which shows itself throughout the life of a Japanese in his fear of public opinion.

The persistence and strength of this instinct up to the present time show how strongly it must be embedded in the Japanese character. For ever since the opening of the country to Western influence and ideas, it has been growing less powerful and less marked; yet it is still extremely strong. Similarly, too, the family system is in process of disintegrating. It was about ten years ago, in 1936, that one of the wisest statesmen of Japan said to me:

"The reason for so much unrest and uncertainty in the minds of the people to-day is because the old family system is breaking up and there is no new system to take its place." Yet how powerful an influence it still exerts !

¹ William McDougall, *Introduction to Social Psychology*.

The family system of Japan represents a stage of social development which every national community has passed through; its survival in that country is due simply to the hiatus in her normal development caused by her two hundred and fifty years of isolation. It is anachronistic. But it must not be forgotten that, though the system has admittedly suppressed individuality and by so doing has been responsible for much that handicaps the Japanese to-day, it has also been the source of great strength, not only to the nation as a whole, but to the individual.

The sense of nationality, the development of the ideas of loyalty, self-sacrifice, obedience, duty before personal gratification, all are but the extension of the code of filial piety applied to society as a whole; for it is from filial piety that there grew that code to which we can give no name, but which rules Japanese society so minutely; the full interpretation of which is expressed by the words, *Nihon seishin* or *Yamato damashii*.

To live by rule is a necessary condition of a civilized existence. But there is a vast difference between rules imposed from without and rules imposed from within. The individual in his progress from infancy to old age goes through both stages. It is necessary that, until he gains experience, the rules by which his life is conducted must be imposed—first by his parents, then as his environment expands, by his school, and so on. But as the imposition of discipline from without decreases, that from within should increase. The purpose of external control is to inculcate internal discipline and self-control. Finally, by the time he enters on his profession, he is considered capable of standing on his own feet and of judging for himself what he may or may not do. The only external authority he must obey is that of his country—the Law of the land. But if, for example, the authority of parental governance is exerted too long, he develops an indecisive and undisciplined character. Should the parent suddenly die, he is quite unfitted, at least for a considerable time, to guide and control his conduct.

What is true of the individual is also true of society as a whole, as was very clearly shown in Japan after the Restoration. The sudden change from the strict regimentation and control of the

Shogun's administration, even though this had been considerably relaxed during the latter years of its survival, to an atmosphere of comparative liberty introduced through Western impacts and ideas, led to a sudden laxity in morals and behaviour, which was as much deplored by the Japanese themselves as it was criticized by the foreigner. Also, with the official abolition of feudalism, the barriers between class and class began slowly to disintegrate.

The tendency of the Japanese character to go to extremes was immediately shown in a weakening of the disciplines—formerly so compelling—demanded in filial piety. Japanese youth, always brought up to show a submissive respect to their elders and teachers, frequently displayed an arrogant conceit and insolence that were among the most distressing signs of the times.

Fortunately at that time the gradual weakening of the sanctions imposed by the family and communal codes was greatly compensated for by the introduction of conscription. The relaxing of personal discipline was offset by that learnt in barrack life, which had a lasting effect on the nation's youth. The years spent in the Army also helped to restore the "family sense" to its former position. Not only did regimental life give back that consciousness of corporate responsibility which was in danger of being forgotten, but it revived those ideals of loyalty and obedience—of duty in fact—which in the reaction from feudal bondage were felt to be no longer necessary.

This feeling of belonging to a common group is, as we have seen, a vital need of the Japanese character.

As in the period immediately following the Restoration, so also during the twenty years prior to 1940, there were constant complaints that "the young men of to-day" lacked the virtues of the older generations, and the Student class was specially singled out as affording proof of the contention. The blame was often laid on the educational system, which "failed to give adequate moral stamina to the youth of the country". In actual fact Japanese Education was doing its utmost—and unfortunately succeeding only too well—to inculcate the old feudal ideas of complete subservience to authority! No: the cause lay in something much more fundamental—the

ill-digested absorption of those Western ideas of personal freedom imposed upon a people in no sense ready for them. Is history to repeat itself? Is there no danger of the same thing happening again?

In the task undertaken by the Allies, that of the reconstruction of Japan, there is a possibility of the essential problem—the remoulding of the Japanese character—being overlooked, or relegated to the second place. There is so much in this character which is admirable and which must be preserved at all costs. How can the weaknesses either be eliminated or converted to elements of value? If the basis of such a work can be laid, Japan will re-construct herself under her own steam.

As I see it, the fundamental weakness of the Japanese character is the reliance that it places, at all stages of life, upon external authority, and its dependence on the opinion of others, to the great detriment of individual capacity and growth. Then there is the very narrow outlook on the world around, which formerly saw everything only through Japanese eyes, to such a degree that the Japanese assumed their own code of ethics to be suitable for all mankind.

The breaking up of the old standards which is now taking place in Japan may so easily lead to disaster. The removal of the former sanctions, with nothing to take their place, is pregnant with the possibility of complete moral anarchy. We are liable to forget that the growth of a balanced individualism, such as we enjoy, is the result of a long and slow evolution, for which Christianity, with its doctrine of the infinite value of each individual soul, was greatly responsible. We have seen that the reaction of undisciplined conduct among the youth of Japan that followed the Meiji Restoration was greatly remedied by conscription and the regimental life; as also by the educational methods subsequently introduced. Both of these have ceased to exist. Conscription has been abolished, while the whole purpose of the present educational reform is to eliminate the former authoritarian methods and to inculcate democracy as understood in the U.S.A. This is surely a daring experiment, particularly in Japan, owing to the extravagant emotionalism of the people.

Already, indeed, there are disquieting symptoms among the youth of Japan, which show how little the idea of democracy is

being understood. Thus the correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor* (June 22nd 1946) describes how he asked some Imperial University students for a definition of "Democracy". One replied: "None of us really knows what it is. Most of us would probably define it 'as anything that is new'." The article continues: "Other Japanese have said the general concept of democracy is 'doing whatever you want to do'. . . . Teachers in the schools . . . are completely at a loss as to how to 'teach Democracy'. Some of them tell their students they don't need to pay any attention to what older people say, with the result that despairing mothers find themselves confronted with intractable, intransigent children who are merely being 'democratic'."

"Democracy" is in reality practically indefinable. It is primarily a way of thought which is eventually translated into a way of life. It is not a subject that can be taught in the same way as History, Geography or Mathematics.

An attempt to inculcate Democracy through the schools of any country would be difficult enough. But in Japan it must meet with almost insuperable obstacles.

The first is the extreme paucity of teachers who themselves have any idea of what the word really means. The second is the centuries-old social organization of Japan which includes much of what can only be called the religious conviction of the people.

The teaching of Democracy to the Japanese cannot therefore be confined merely to an attempt to change the political consciousness of the people—and this alone would be difficult enough; it must also involve a complete revolution in their ethical outlook; and any attempt to achieve this by "shock" tactics would seem to be singularly unwise. For such a change must grow gradually from within; it cannot be imposed from without.

It will not, I trust, be thought that any of the above has been written in a spirit of petty, carping criticism. This would be not merely most ill-timed and discourteous, but coming from one who is genuinely fond of the Japanese people, extremely ungrateful to those of the occupation authorities who are tackling a job of tremendous complexity with sympathy and understanding, with

undeniable vigour and a considerable degree of success. Moreover, the extent and nature of the many difficulties to be encountered can only be appreciated by those who have passed some years among the Japanese. They must be truly colossal.

Much has indeed been accomplished. Order has succeeded to the chaos that reigned far and wide when the Occupation force first landed. Two General Elections have been held, and that under circumstances and conditions never before experienced—freedom from bribery, tyranny and fear. A really representative Diet has accordingly been elected, women—again for the first time—not only registering their votes, but being, in some thirty cases, successful at the Polls and being sent up to Tokyo as Members. The activities of the Diet itself have been almost unbelievable. A new Constitution has come into being which establishes the Emperor as a symbol of the State and of the united will of the people. Bills have been passed revolutionising the whole system of Land Tenure, while those concerned with Labour Legislation have given the workers rights such as they could never have dreamed of in former days. Under this Legislation, Trade Unions have sprung up on all sides and strikes have become a common-place ! The Education Service has been reformed from top to bottom in both the administrative and executive departments, while other vital activities such as the Health Service, Postal Organization etc., are in process of being restored and placed on a sure foundation. Neither must it be forgotten that the effect of all these efforts has been to raise the Japanese people out of the slough of despond into which defeat had plunged them, and to give them some sort of vision of a more encouraging future.

These are only a part of the achievements, and they form an impressive record indeed ! Yet the fact must be faced that the model on which these activities are based are not Japanese. It will be recalled that, after the Meiji Restoration, the Emperor sent his emissaries all over the world taking the best from *each* nation and adapting it to Japanese requirements. Now the models and methods of *one* nation are being imposed. Moreover, these various and truly great accomplishments deal only with the externals of life. Can it yet be said that there is any fundamental change in the hearts of the people?

Much indeed has been accomplished ; but what of those hearts ?

First of all, what do the Allies require of Japan ? Primarily a change in the type of government, a change from an authoritarian regime to that kind of Democracy practised in the U.S.A. and Britain. This can only arise from a proper understanding of true co-operative individualism. That must come first ; from it Democracy will evolve.

To imagine that the outward appearance of a democratic form of government, with all the machinery of free speech, secret ballot, elections, and so forth, will itself produce the balanced individualism necessary, is to put all the carts before the horses.

What is required is, by some means or other to produce in the Japanese mind a change both in values and in vision, while utilizing at the same time everything of worth in the long-existing social and ethical organization, but adjusted to a way of life which will encourage a disciplined, co-operative individualism within the body politic.

Now the evolution of Democracy in England was a long process, originating in the teaching of Christianity and stimulated by the rise of a powerful middle class, which was largely the result of the industrial revolution. It depended, therefore, on both spiritual and economic factors. It is true that the functionings of Democracy both in England and the U.S.A. have been exposed to many a caustic criticism, particularly in regard to the impoverishment of the masses and the absorption of wealth into the hands of the few. But the perversion of the economic and moral laws on which Democracy should be founded was in fact due to the neglect of the spiritual teaching from which it chiefly sprung.

It is surely clear that in Japan any sudden breaking away from old and deeply embedded sources of discipline, without offering anything with which to replace them, must lead to chaos and possible revolution. The question then arises : is there any system or organization which could fulfil this function, and if so, are there any existing assets in the present Japanese social and moral organization on which such a system can be built ?

To start with, it must be built on the family, but not on the family system. The idea of the family is so deeply rooted in the

Japanese mind, that it must remain at the basis of the national life. But clearly the hierarchical grading within the family, with its rigid code of Filial Piety, must be so modified as to allow full scope for individual initiative and effort. The "must" of Filial Piety will be replaced by the "should" and "ought" of a rational ethic, thus bringing the will into action and eliminating that unreasoning obedience so repressive of individual aspiration.

Another conception held by the Japanese, and equal in strength to the family, is that of the *kami*, with which is connected the sense of tradition and the past history of the race. Many would advocate the elimination of this idea, owing to the possible effect it might have of perpetuating the evils of feudalism and aggression. But it is in fact a most valuable asset. For in the great work of reconstruction, one should never lose sight of the general principle that vices are so often but misdirected, perverted, or even exaggerated virtues; emotions directed into healthy channels become sources of great strength and splendid deeds.

Thus the intense loyalty to the Throne, and the love of country, which are an integral part of the Japanese character, are emphatically an asset of which any nation might be proud. The fact that these concepts were deliberately manipulated to evil ends by a militaristic clique to serve its own purpose in no way detracts from the value of the feelings themselves.

Now any new system designed to take the place of the existing repressive and compulsive code hitherto in force in Japan, must not only make full provision for such concepts as those above, but must also provide a form of social organization which will give full scope to the sense of corporate responsibility. Though the persistence, to an exaggerated extent, of the group mentality, is responsible for much that has been detrimental to the Japanese character, its survival in a modified and balanced form is essential if the highest qualities of that character are to be brought out. For it is the root from which grows the sense of brotherhood, of common purpose and co-operation in pursuit of high ideals. Without it no form of democracy would ever be possible.

Any new system, therefore, would have to take this factor into

account. It would have to contain within itself an organization in which brotherhood in its widest possible interpretation was an integral and essential element.

What has been said hitherto relates to certain mental or psychic characteristics of the Japanese. But in the work of reconstruction the true purpose of that work must never be overlooked. It is surely to lay such foundations as will facilitate the growth of a real democracy grounded in the hearts of the people. This can never be done so long as the nation is under an economic strain. It must be obvious that if in any nation there is a grave shortage of the necessities of life, the existing Government will be bound to exercise such rigid controls as to render its nature dictatorial or totalitarian—anything, in short, but democratic. Democracy can only flourish where a nation is economically stabilized and where the system in force provides for equitable distribution of the results of labour and enterprise—i.e. wealth and security to all classes.

But to deal with so vast a problem as the financial and economic rehabilitation of Japan is far beyond the scope of this short work. Rather would I confine myself to discussing the possibility of producing that kind of atmosphere, that kind of emotional, intellectual and spiritual outlook among the people favourable to the carrying out of the various reforms and changes in the national life that are so necessary.

I have tried to show that the main, the fundamental cause of Japan's troubles has been, and still is, psychological. The perpetuation of a pre-mediæval, oriental social-mindedness has produced in the nation an acute state of maladjustment *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world, and the attempts to remedy this state of affairs by superficial and temporary measures has, not unnaturally, brought the patient to disaster.

It is, of course, well known that in psychotherapy it is the mental outlook of the patient himself that is of paramount importance. Is there, then, any course of treatment, any remedy that, applied to the people of Japan, will produce such a change in their psychological condition as will effect the complete readjustment necessary? I believe there is; and to the discussion of that proposed remedy I devote my final chapter.

XVIII

JAPAN AND THE IDEAL

IN ALL cases of psychological illness or disorder, diagnosis is often a matter of considerable difficulty. But if this is so in regard to individuals, it is likely to be far more so when one is dealing with a whole nation. In fact it might well be regarded as a waste of time to attempt such an analysis; for how is it possible that so wide and vague a generalization as would seem to be the only likely result should be of any value?

Were any other country than Japan under examination it would be a futile task. But in this one particular case I believe it to be perfectly possible—I believe that Japan, alone among the nations, can be regarded psychologically as an individual, and that it is therefore possible actually to put a finger on the one fundamental cause of her errors and wrongdoing.

In pre-war days there was a comparison which the Japanese were constantly making. It would often appear in the Press, be heard in conversations and even in formal speeches: “Nippon is the Great Britain of the East!” They would then instance the similarity in the geographical position of the two countries; how each land was ruled by a Monarch, be he King or Emperor, and how each was the product of a long and varied history and rich tradition, and so on and so forth. There was also, in those days, a certain boast which, as the fateful year of 1941 drew nearer, was to be heard ever more insistently: “The Japanese have never been defeated. No invader has ever succeeded in landing on her shores!” I would sometimes point out that in this respect, at any rate, there was no similarity between Britain and Japan; that the former had not only been invaded again and again, but that the invaders had in general remained, and that it was just this admixture of blood that had given the race its stamina, its culture and its strength.

This facile comparison between Britain and Japan could hardly have been more unfortunate; for the empty boast of Japan's invincibility in the past only stressed what was in reality the fundamental reason for her chief national weakness, just as Britain's subjugation by successive waves of invaders has been the source of her strength. Celts, Vikings, Danes, Romans, Angles, Saxons and Normans, have, each in turn, overrun the land, some more, some less, and where they settled down and made that land their homeland, they brought with them the qualities and culture of their respective races to the infinite enrichment and strengthening of the country of their adoption.

But England is not unique in this experience, save perhaps in the number of times she has undergone it and in the fact that, in view of her peculiarly equable climate, the invaders have for the most part preferred to remain, thus rendering the results of their adventure more thorough and far-reaching. Every single country in the world that has risen to any position of power or influence has likewise been the goal of invaders—except one, Japan!

It has always been a matter of some astonishment to me that this peculiar fact about the Japanese race has not been more frequently noted and commented on. I refer to its unique homogeneity. From the time of that first emigration from the Korean peninsula to Idzumo province, thousands of years ago, there has been absolutely no admixture of other blood with that of the Japanese. It is remarkable! Now, each country evolves for itself the government and social organization it finds most suitable. But as it develops through the centuries, through the advent of new blood, through shocks and countershocks, through new ideas and ideologies, new customs and linguistic idioms and expressions, so the social organization adjusts itself, rearranges its component parts, forms and reforms in new groups and alignments, till slowly a definite national culture emerges which itself is ever being enlarged and enriched by fresh influxes of novel ideas and forms of art, literature and philosophy. This process in the normal development of a race is never-ending.

It has been shown how much Japan was affected by the influence

of China brought over by Buddhist missionaries. But this is a very different type of influence from that brought about through the influx of new blood which, as the centuries go by, through inter-marriage and foreign intercourse, produces the urge to the creation of new thoughts and ideologies from within the people themselves.

In Japan, through the homogeneity mentioned above, this normal development has been curbed and sadly stunted, a state of affairs which was further intensified through the isolation of the country. So that, instead of a nation displaying a constantly changing variety of thoughts and ideas, of original conceptions and visions, we find in Japan a people who, in the varying circumstances of life, think alike, act and react alike, who seem to be lacking in all originality, and who have given hardly anything to the world in the way either of philosophy or creative thought.

It must of course be admitted that such a homogeneity as exists among the Japanese people is, in a certain sense, a source of strength, for in a national crisis it enables them to act as one vast unit with hardly a dissentient voice among them. In time of need they rise to the call of their government as one individual, and with that sense of cohesion they fight and work and play. In the war-time factories when manual work was required, hammer strokes were given at the word of command, the arms of all the workers in the huge workshop rising and falling together in perfect unison. See the Japanese making a road in peace time, the gang of some seven or eight labourers lifting their pickaxes and letting them fall at the same second. Oddly enough, when they march they are incapable of walking in step !

Now it is the fact of this homogeneity that enables one to diagnose the psychological abnormalities of the Japanese as of no other race ; moreover its effect was greatly intensified by and through the isolation period, which itself was the direct cause of the extremely narrow and nationalistic outlook, one of the chief reasons for the country's downfall.

Thus it was that when the gates of Japan were forced open by the visit of Commodore Perry, she found herself totally unfitted to cope with the modern world. There then began that feverish search

for all that the West could give her which, adapted to her own needs, might supply her with the equipment that would enable her to live at ease in that strange, new world. That search has gone on ever since—and it has never really succeeded. For one of the effects of this racial homogeneity in a society of so narrow an outlook has been to render it markedly resistant to the adoption of new ideas, painfully sensitive to foreign impacts, and unresponsive to stimuli from abroad.

This statement may at first sight seem like a contradiction of what was said earlier—that the Japanese are past-masters at adaptation. But adapting is not adopting, and when such adaptations of foreign material, methods or thought are examined, it will almost invariably be found that what has been taken over has been but the superficial aspect of the desired object. They have not effected a real incorporation into their own national life of foreign practices, systems or ideas. Not that they would not if they could, for I am quite convinced that, were it within their power, they would gladly adopt, in the true sense of the word, the best that other nations have to offer them, and the very essentials of that best. But a whole nation, brought up on the narrowest of nationalistic ideas, and governed by a general uniformity of idea and outlook, forms a mass of resistance that is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to permeate or overcome.

This search for something different, for something new, is one of the most marked features in the Japanese character. A new idea, a new fashion, a new method of teaching, a new shop, a new restaurant, a new anything, will, for the moment, be the centre of attraction. Few of such novelties are tried out more than once!

There is surely something very suggestive, significant, and indeed pathetic about such testing.

So too in the world outside, the search went on—for what? I doubt if the seekers knew themselves. But every Japanese that goes abroad invariably carries a diary and small note-book, and everything that occurs, especially anything that is new or strange, is noted down and conned over on his return. Quite frequently a report is written "for the authorities". But it is my belief that, in

the majority of cases, this desire to observe and to note is but a manifestation of the inner urge to discover things which, adopted into the life and civilization of their own land, will contribute to a life of happiness and contentment.

Those of us who have lived among the Japanese for some years, and who have seen them both at home and abroad, know well the effect that change of environment has upon them. There are, of course, many exceptions who seem to be as adaptable to their surroundings as any widely-travelled American or Englishman. But in general the Japanese abroad is quite different from what he is at home. Once he has left the soil of Nippon, he knows himself to be "in the world but not of the world". He feels himself to be an "outsider". Happy enough at home and in his own accustomed environment—or at least as happy as the Japanese way of life permits him to be—in foreign lands and among foreign peoples he is uncomfortable, restless, nervous and ill at ease.

Now this craving for something new, this unceasing search—it may manifest itself as mere curiosity—that so occupies the mind of the Japanese, is surely the result of an unconscious urge to supply something that is lacking. They feel incomplete.

The psychological law of completeness is perhaps the most fundamental law of life. "Every organism is impelled to move towards its own completeness" (Hadfield, *Psychology and Morals*). This hunger for fulfilment is the most powerful moving force to which we, as individuals, are subject, and until it is satisfied—whether the hunger be material or spiritual—we are conscious of the feeling of incompleteness. This law of completeness may be seen operating in every department of life, especially in that of psychology. In physiology this completeness is called "health"; in psychology it may be called "self-realization".

It is this incompleteness that I believe to be the fundamental cause underlying the abnormalities of Japanese behaviour. Could it be remedied, could it be changed to fulfilment in those particular departments of life where it is chiefly in evidence, I do most assuredly believe that a very deep and lasting change would be seen in the whole of Japanese behaviour, character and life. ;

How does this condition of incompleteness come to be? "Psychologically the urge to completeness is most clearly marked in the instincts" (Hadfield). Now, every instinct insistently craves for expression; if this is given it is satisfied; if not, there arises a feeling of incompleteness. If the normal, healthy instincts are denied—and how constantly does this occur among the Japanese—the impulses become stronger, "until they force satisfaction in direct ways" (as in atrocity phenomena) "or indirectly as in nervous disorders" (Hadfield). In certain cases, then, the condition of incompleteness arises simply from suppression. There are other people, however, a large part of whose personalities have failed to find expression "owing to conflict and repression". Such cases "feel something is wanting, they are at a loss, are timid in facing the world and its difficulties, or wander about *as though they were in search of something lost*" (Hadfield). The italics are my own.

Knowing something of the repressions, the complexes and conflicts under which the Japanese labour in their daily life, we see how they must suffer from this sense of incompleteness, and that, until they attain some degree of fulfilment, they will always be liable to psychological disorders and outbreaks of non-social behaviour.

Psychological completeness—in other words, self-realization—cannot be achieved so long as "there are elements within us that are repressed and denied expression". This sentence alone indicates the degree to which the Japanese may be affected, for it has been shown earlier that there is hardly any activity in their lives in which their emotions, instincts and impulses are not to some extent repressed or suppressed.

But there is one field in particular in which this sense of incompleteness is most in evidence, in which repressions most occur; a fully satisfying activity in this field would carry away the greater part, if not all, of the conflicts, complexes and repressions from which the people suffer. It would be like a river, hitherto choked up with rubbish, silted up with mud and refuse from the past. A new channel is dredged out and the waters begin to flow; they gather strength and momentum as they pass on, sweeping away the different obstructions that lie in their path, until they move free, clear and

unhampered between their banks. The activity I refer to is Religion.

It is very striking to note that almost all writers on Japan and the Japanese, however greatly they may differ on other points, seem to be in agreement on one: that the Japanese appear to have little mystical sense, that they seem to take no interest in transcendental thought, that the veiled mysteries of the inner life are for them barely existent. It is certainly a fact that, through all the long centuries of the past, Japan has contributed little of this nature to the world's thought; no great philosopher of the calibre of Confucius or Lao Tse has come from Nippon; no great teacher has arisen in the Land of the Rising Sun, whose message has left its mark upon the outside world. Even within the narrow circle of the national life, though there have arisen great Buddhist saints like Honen and Shinran, their message, though enthusiastically received at first, cannot be said to have swept the country as a whole.

This is all the more striking when we consider the wealth and depth of Buddhist thought, the stimulus that its philosophy has always given to speculative minds, the heights of aspiration to which so many of its devotees in other lands have been led. But in Japan it does not appear to have done more than effect the surfaces of the religious consciousness of the people. The masses recite their formulas and feel themselves to be "safe". The educated utilize the Koan of Zen Buddhism, not as a means of attaining to the mystic union with the Divine, but merely to make themselves more efficient in the practical duties of daily life.

It would seem, therefore, that when it came to providing a spiritual ideal able to satisfy the cravings and aspirations of the inner life of the Japanese, Buddhism showed itself to be a failure.

Now there can be no healthy development of character and personality without the possession of an *ideal*. What exactly is meant by "the ideal"? Hadfield defines it as "that, the attainment of which produces completeness and self-realization". It is an idea capable of satisfying the craving of the soul for completeness. It not only stimulates the will to action, but also points out the direction, the method and type of that action. Individuals may choose many ideals

in the course of their development ; but whereas some, while realizing that their choice has been poor and inadequate still deliberately pursue it, others cast it on one side when it fails to bring the happiness and contentment desired. So the search goes on until the Ideal is discovered, that which, as was noted above, "produces completeness and self-realization".

It is, I think, very significant that there has always been one ideal towards which the Japanese people as a whole have looked, which has produced in them high qualities of loyalty and devotion—the person of the Emperor. Up to and through the years of the war, this ideal was accompanied by feelings of the greatest awe, respect, almost fear, and the strength of these feelings overshadowed the more intimate and "softer" emotions of love and affection. But now that the Emperor has cast aside the "cloak of divinity" under and behind which the ruling oligarchies have always tried to conceal him, now that he has emerged from his seclusion and mingled with his people, he has taken a place in their *hearts* as never before.

But the "worship" offered to the Emperor was always something quite different from that through which the Japanese expressed their religious instincts to the *kami* and the Buddhist "deities". For though it is perfectly true that the Japanese in general do not, or cannot, think in terms of transcendentalism, and would seem to be unable to grasp concepts of a mystical nature, yet they are a truly religious people if by religion is understood "reverence for a super-sensible power and devotion", for this the people possess in abundance. To them nature is the veil that hides some mysterious reality which is all around them, and the ubiquitous presence of shrines, temples and images, the little groups of pilgrims in their special white clothing to be met at all seasons of the year, the various festivals with their processions and ceremonies, all these are evidence of that vague consciousness of the unseen which the Japanese most certainly possess. But its very vagueness prevents it from being a personal, individual possession. It is something shared, common to all, much as is the air around them. Such a "religion" has never been able to, indeed could not, provide an Ideal.

To sum up, then, it is affirmed that the fact of the Japanese being

psychologically incomplete is the root cause of those faults and abnormal characteristics that have brought them to their present fate.

That they are to some extent conscious of this incompleteness is shown by their never-ending quest for "some new thing", for new ideas, fresh contacts and novel experiences; thus they demonstrate dissatisfaction with their existing condition and the urge to find a remedy for what is vaguely felt to be lacking.

What they are actually seeking is the Ideal. This will give them that sense of completeness through which alone they can achieve self-realization and happiness.

Though they possess a religious sense, yet neither the beliefs of Shinto, nor the teachings of Confucius or Buddhism, have succeeded in supplying them with that Ideal.

The nearest approach to an ideal strong enough to affect the conduct of almost all Japanese is that of the person of their Emperor. But this is a limited conception, and will not fulfil that need which can only be satisfied when the Ideal is discovered.

Where then is this Ideal to be found ?

In the Christian Faith.

It is a fact of no small significance that the greatest authority on present-day Japan, the man with a unique opportunity to observe the needs and aspirations, the actions and reactions of the Japanese people during these abnormal times—I refer of course to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, General MacArthur—has made no secret of his hopes of seeing, not only the democratization of Japan, but also its Christianization. Furthermore, he has not confined himself to vague expressions of hope only; he has shown a practical interest in helping towards the realization of those hopes by facilitating the return of Christian missionaries and by encouraging them in their labours so far as his position permits him to.¹

It is more than probable that he has reached his conclusions as to the desirability of a Christian Japan along lines altogether

¹ It must never be thought, however, that General MacArthur has tried to impose Christianity on the Japanese. On the contrary, he has always been most careful to make no distinction between the different Faiths. He has simply provided the Japanese with opportunities to learn, and left the subsequent action to them.

different from those suggested here. It is, of course, a fact of history that democracy, as known to Britain and the United States, is a form of government developed in and through a Christian civilization. For democracy is a way of life. Totalitarian dictators cannot function in a state where Christianity is a living force; so they do their best to destroy or suppress it.

It is doubtless the understanding of all this that lies at the basis of General MacArthur's hope. He has planted the seeds of democracy. Could he see those seeds putting forth their shoots from a Christian soil he would be assured, not only that they were strongly rooted, but also that their subsequent growth would be steady, healthy and certain of final fruition.

But in addition to this historical line of approach there are other reasons of a psychological nature which convince me that Christianity, and Christianity alone, is the remedy for Japan's troubles, difficulties and needs.

"But," it may be objected, "if the great religion of Buddhism has already failed, if the cult of Shinto and the teachings of Confucius have been unable to supply the Japanese with the Ideal you say they need, why in the world give them another religion?"

Because Christianity is *unique*—and in its very uniqueness offers to the Japanese an Ideal to the type of which they have already shown they are drawn—a person. For the uniqueness of Christianity consists in this—that it is the Person of Christ that is its centre: the Person of Christ is the measure of all things, and "the fundamental rule is, 'Follow Me'" (Otto Karrer, *Religions of Mankind*).

There is nothing vague about this. It is a fact as simple as it is tremendous, and the invincible appeal of that Person to the heart of the Japanese has already been demonstrated in Japanese history. Nor can any greater tribute to the power and strength of that appeal be imagined than the frightful persecutions ordered by the Tokugawa Shoguns, culminating in the Decrees of Expulsion and Isolation.

But to turn for a moment to the more practical side of life, assuming that Japan as a whole and in time adopted Christianity, how far would that Faith fulfil the needs and satisfy the conditions outlined in the last chapter?

To start with, Christian civilization is built on the Family, a healthy family-life being the *sine qua non* for a healthy State. The Christian Family is, in its turn, based on the sanctity of the marriage tie. It stresses the duties between parents and children and *vice versa*; but at the same time, it encourages a healthy individualism, the training of the child in responsibilities and especially in its "duty to its neighbour", thus putting an end to the narrow limitation imposed by the "family system". There must be no slavish obedience, but rather a disciplined co-operation based on free-will and kindness. In fact, so far as the Family is concerned, the Christian conception supplies precisely what is required.

What would be the Christian view of the *kami*? Every presentation of Christianity has always stressed reverence for the departed and loving care of their graves as being one of the duties incumbent on every Christian. Prayers on their behalf are also frequently enjoined, while the corporate unity existing between the Church Militant on earth and the Church at Rest is official Christian teaching. Thus the conception of the close contact existing between the *kami* and those still on earth would be uplifted and enhanced. In general, then, the cruder beliefs attached to the *kami* would be replaced by a more spiritual interpretation.

As to the feelings of the Japanese for their Emperor, these, too, by being rationalized would be rendered, if less material, yet more profound.

"The powers that be are ordained of God" (*Romans* xiii. 1).

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (*Matthew* xxii. 21).

"Do honour to all; love the brotherhood; reverence God; honour the Emperor" (1 *Peter* ii. 17).

In these three statements are laid down, not only the position of the ruler and his relationship to his people, but also the foundation on which a democratic state should be built.

There is, finally, the question of a social organization which will preserve and enhance the many valuable qualities that have been

developed among the Japanese by the persistence of the "group mentality"; but which will eliminate the weaknesses for which that same mentality has been responsible. Now, I think it will be generally agreed that, among the most pressing needs of the people of Japan is the destruction of that narrow, self-centred, nationalistic viewpoint which has done such infinite harm to the nation. Nothing is more likely to effect this destruction so thoroughly as membership of the most international organization the world has ever known—the great *corpus* of Christian believers, of every race, of every nation, of every class and colour—the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church on earth. Yet within this tremendous Society are the many lesser units that comprise It—bodies and groups devoted to special objects, guilds and confraternities, clubs, sodalities and fellowships, etc.; a host of smaller groups, separate yet all united as their members are themselves united in loyalty to the One central Figure—the Person of Christ. This, for the Japanese people, is the vital, the nation-saving fact—the discovery at long last of the Ideal.

We know what the possession of that Ideal accomplished among the Japanese people in the seventeenth century, the heights to which it drew them, the flaming loyalty it inspired among them—a loyalty and devotion that surpassed anything they had ever conceived of, that held them faithful when in the power of the torturer and executioner: and—yet more astounding—held those simple villagers faithful through two hundred odd years without a word or sign of encouragement from the outer world.

Here is seen the capacity of the Japanese when they are attached whole-heartedly to the One Ideal. To such an Ideal, once realized, their devotion is entire; their eagerness for service on its behalf, and their self-forgetfulness in that service, is *whole*-hearted; nothing is withheld. The normally unbalanced emotionalism is steadied and directed; the will is forged to steel-like strength, and the life, *complete* in every sense, is lived in the fulfilment of that Ideal.

But of course this is not conceived of as an instantaneous occurrence. Such a transformation of life and character as the finding and recognition of the Ideal would entail, is far more likely to be a matter of long years—even generations—of endeavour, of frequent

failure, of perseverance and constant recovery. But once the Japanese people know themselves to have found the Ideal they have been seeking so long, even if at first the discovery be but a glimpse, there will be no turning back. For, once glimpsed, the Vision of the Ideal I speak of ever grows, ever becomes more worth while, richer, more fulfilling, more compelling. He who possesses It, be he Japanese or of any other race, knows with Pascal that "apart from Christ we know not what our life or our death is; we do not know what God is; nor what we ourselves are".

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INDEX

A

Aboriginals, the, 1, 11
 Achievements of the Occupation, 204
 ADAMS, Will, 83, 89
 Adoption, reasons for, 23
 AINU, the, 1, 2, 11
Akido, the, 73
Amaterasu-o-mi-Kami, 6, 36, 57
Amida Buddhism, 50
 Ancestor Worship, 10 *seq.*, 33
 Animism, 10
 ANJIRO, first Japanese Christian, 79
 Annihilation, Ieyasu's Edict of, 83
 ARAKI, General, as Minister of Education, 110
 Aristocracy, effect of hereditary, 123
 Art, Chinese, reaches Japan, 53
 ASHIKAGA, Takauji, 63
 Association, ex-Service Men's, 112
 Atrocity phenomena, analysis of, 135-8
 Authoritarianism, 23

B

Bakufu, the, 55, 61, 73, 74, 93, 94, 96
Bambetsu, the, 9
 Banishment, punishment and severity of, 31, 32
 Bantu, Japanese language, connected with, 6
 Barrenness as cause of divorce, 24
 Basque, Japanese language akin to, 6
 Bath, place of, in daily life, 162
 "Black Ships", the, 94, 103, 154
Bon-Odori, 52
 Boys' Festival, the, 76
 BUDDHISM, 47 *seq.*; *Amida*, 50; introduction of Chinese art by, 53; Zen sect of, 54; influence of, 56; becomes a military power, 62; destruction of power by Nobunaga, 65; preserves culture, 102
Buke, the, 60, 72, 191
Bushido, 192
Butsudan, 19, 21

C

Cafés, musical, 131
 Charter Oath of Meiji, 104
Choshu clan, the, 100
 Christianity, 79 *seq.*; discovery of, after the isolation, 90; provides solution of Japan's reconstruction problem, 216
Chu, its meaning and implications, 146
 Cinema, the, as a means of escape, 183
 Classics, revival of Japanese, 91
 Code, of Filial Piety, 21; First Education, 104; Japanese ethical, 161
 Committee-mindedness of the Japanese, 34
 Community, Shinto in the, 25 *seq.*
 Compromise or *dakyo*, use of, 186
 Conduct, what comprises moral, 127
 CONFUCIANISM, 47, 74
 "Consciousness of kind", the, 119;
 Dual consciousness of Japanese, 128
 Conscription Act, the first, 98; injustice of, 100
 Convenient, or *benri*, 184
 Conversions, number of early Christian, 82
 Crucifixion of Christians in Japan, 82, 85

D

Daimyo, the, 39, 61; number of — under Ieyasu, 73; of Satsuma and Bungo, 80
Dan-no-Ura, battle of, 60
 Death, primitive conception of, 18; five degrees of — penalty, 77; Japanese attitude to, 140
 Deification of the Emperor, 7
 Depression, incidence of mental, among Japanese, 183
 Discipline, self-imposed, 179
 Divinity of Emperor, 7
 Divorce, barrenness a cause of, 24
 Dominicans, the Order of the, 82, 89

E

- Edict of annihilation against Christians, 83
 Education, 101 *seq.*; text of Imperial Rescript on, 105; Militarism and, 107
 Embassy of Catholic notables to Europe, 81
 Emotions, control of, obligatory, 169
 Emperor, deification and divinity of, 7
Eta, the, 72
 Ethics synonymous with custom, 33
 Execution, various methods of, for Christians, 85
 Extravagance of upper classes, 64

F

- "Face", importance of, 152
 Family, meaning of, in Japan, 23; the — system, 200
 Fertility Cult, 167
 Feudal: persistence of — mentality, 129; — villages, 132
 Feudalism, beginning of Japanese, 54; development of, 57 *seq.*; height of, 68 *seq.*; abolition of, 129
 Filial Piety, code of, 21, 206
 Flower arrangement, 178
 "Fosse", the, torture of, 85
 Franciscans, the Order of the, 82, 89
 FUJIWARA, the family of the, 58
Fumie, the ordeal of, 85

G

- Geisha system, the, 168
Gimu and *giri* classification, 145 *seq.*
 "Go-between", the, or *nakōdo*, ubiquity of, 187
 GO-DAIGO, the Emperor, 62
Goshi, a kind of yeomanry, 73
 Guilds, 73

H

- Harakiri*, 8, 141
 HASHIMOTO, Kingoro, Lt.-Gen., 108
Hatamoto, the, the Shogun's body-guard, 72
 "Heavenly Sovereign", origin of, 4
Heigo, the military language, 121
Heimin, the, or common people, 72, 73

- Herd instinct, the, 117; persistence of, 199
 HIDEYADA Tokugawa, 84
 HIDEYORI, son of Hideyoshi Toyotomi, 70
 HIDEYOSHI Toyotomi, 64; description of, 66; achievements of, 66 *seq.*; his anti-Christian edict, 81
 Hiei, Mount, centre of Buddhism, 65
 Hierarchy, wealth of Buddhist, 65
Hinin or "not-man", 32
 HIRATA Atsutane, famous Shinto authority, 92
 HOJO family, the, 62
 HONEN, the Shinto saint, 50
Hyakusho the, or farmer class, 73, 121

I

- IDZUMO, the Province of, 3; the — type of Japanese, 5
 IEMITSU Tokugawa, 85
 IEYASU Tokugawa, 40, 64; becomes Shogun, 70; issues edict of annihilation against Christians, 83
Ihai or Buddhist tablets, 19
 Imitation, the laws of, 120
 Immigration, the first from the South, 2
 Imperial Cult, 36
 Imperial House, the rise of, 4
 Individualism, the crime of, 113
 Industry of Japanese, the, 125
Insei, monastic seclusion for Emperors, 59
 Instability of Japanese character, 184
 Instinct: the "herd", 117; —s of self-assertion and submission, 135; the sex, 164; persistence of "herd", 199
 Ise, the Shrine of, 39
 Isolation of Japan, 87, 119; and imitation, 122

J

- Japanese: origins of — people, 1 *seq.*; source of — language, 5
 Jesuits, favoured by Nobunaga, 81; success and failure of, 88
 JIMMU, the Emperor, 8
Jodo pietism, 50

K

- KAGOSHIMA, 79
Kaikoku shinshu, slogan at the Restoration, 96
 KAMAKURA, 50, 60
Kami, the, 11 *seq. et passim*
Karma, the Buddhist law of cause and effect, 56
Kashiki dokoro in the Imperial Palace, 37
Kempeitai, the, or gendarmerie, 130
Kiheitai, the, or "surprise troops", 97
Koan, the Zen practice of, 175
Kobetsu, early name for members of the Imperial family, 7
 KOBO-DAISHI, posthumous title of the famous ecclesiastic Kukai, 48
Kojiki, the, the earliest records of Japan, 6, 8
Koku, the normal measure of rice, 72
Kokumin dotoku or "morals", 109
 KOREA, immigration into, 2; emigration from — to Japan, 3; Japanese government in, 130
Kuge, the class of nobility, 60, 72
 KUKAI (*see* Kobo-Daishi above)
 KUMASO group, the, 3; the — type, 5
Kumi, or household group, 76
Kyohu period, the, 103
 KYOTO, the Imperial city, 60, 64; burnt out, 80

L

- Language: source of Japanese, 5;
 Special Court —, 76; teaching of foreign —s, 104
 Land survey of Hideyoshi, 69
 Legislation, effect of anti-foreign, 93
 Library, first public, 102
 Love, place of romantic, 166
 Loyalty, 39; justifies crime, 75; religion of, 95, 110, 146, 206

M

- MABUCHI, famous Shinto scholar, 92
 MACARTHUR, General, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in Japan, idealism of, 198; views on Christianisation of Japan, 216
Makoto or "sincerity", 157 *seq.*

- Marriage discussed in family council, 30
 Martyr: the first Christian —s, 82;
 Confraternities of —dom, 85;
 —s for "dangerous thoughts", 110
 Masochism, 138
Memboku or "face", 153
 Merchant class, rise of, 100
 Mikado worship, 42
 MINAMOTO clan, the, 54, 60, 102
 MINOBE, the case of Dr., 133
Missions Étrangères, 89
Mitamaya, the Shinto shrine, 19, 21, 37
 MONBUSHO (Education Department), establishment of, 104
 Morals, teaching of, 109
 MORI, Viscount, Minister of Education, 106
 MORI Motomori, famous Daimyo of the Choshu clan, 97
 MOTOORI Norinaga, famous Shinto scholar, 22, 92
Moya, mourning or death house, 18
 MUTSUHITO, the Emperor (now known as the Emperor Meiji), 98

N

- Nihongi*, the earliest records of Japan, 6, 8
Nippon Seinenkai, or Japan Youth Federation, 108
 NOBUNAGA Oda, 64; Favours Jesuits, 81
 NOGI, General, death of, 142
Nohei, the, peasant armed bands, 69, 97

O

- Oath, the Charter, taken by Emperor Meiji, 104
 Obedience, fundamental importance of, 22
 Obligations, the code of, 144 *seq.*
 ODA Nobunaga, 64
 Oligarchies begin, 8; government by, 124
 OMURA, the Lord of, converted, 80
On, meaning "favour", the word on which Japanese conduct is largely based, 144 *seq.*

Orei, a small fee, 151
 Origin of the Japanese, 1
 Ostracism, the punishment of, 31
 Osumi, the reputed place where the Imperial ancestor arrived from Heaven, 7

P

PAKCHOI, Prince of, sends Buddhist delegation, 48
 PEARL HARBOUR, 155
 PERRY, visit of Commodore, 41, 94
 Personalities, split, 123, 128 *seq.*
 Phallicism, traces of, 36, 167
 Pilgrimages, students forced to go on, 112
 Pontiff, Emperor as Chief, 38
 Pope, first Japanese embassy to pay homage to, 81
 Portuguese traders, 80; held monopoly, 82
 Privacy almost unknown in Japan, 30
 Propaganda: Emperor, 44; "power" —, 136; war — compared with that of West, 171
 Psychology, the approach of, 117 *seq.*
 Punishment, legal, under the Tokugawa, 77
 Purification, the Great, ritual of, 18, 189

R

Racial impact, the, 1 *seq.*
 Reciprocity, the principle of, in Japan, 151
 Reconstruction, the problem of, 194 *seq.*
 Recruits, brutalising of, 130, 131
 Regalia, the Imperial, 63
 Relationship between Japan and U.S.A. unique, 197
 Religion, characteristics of tribal, 25; — and ethics identified, 33
 Repression and suppression distinguished, 135
 Rescript on Education by Emperor Meiji, 105
 Respectability, much emphasis laid on, 182
 Responsibility, its place in Japanese life, 192

Restoration, the, of the Emperor Meiji, 41, 91, 96
 Revenge in the Japanese ethic, 154
 Rice riots, 73, 93
 Ronin, or masterless Samurai, 31, 98; the story of the forty-seven, 142, 150, 165
 Ryobu Shinto, 49

S

Sadism, definition of, 136
 St. FRANCIS XAVIER, 79
Samurai spirit, the, 130
Samurai Class, the, 61, 68, 72, 97, 191; abolition of, 98
 SATSUMA rebellion, the, 99
 Schools, Technical, 107; Youth, 108
 Secret service in Manchuria, Japanese, 128
Sei-i Dai-shogun, the title of the head of the Bakufu, 94
Seinendan, or Young Men's Association, 108
Seinengakko, or Youth Schools, 108
Seinen Gunren Gakko, or Youth (Military) Training Schools, 108
Seishin, or Japanese spirit, 109; *Nihon*, 191
 SEKIGAHARA, battle of, 70, 83
 SENDAI, 4
Seppuku (refined word for *harakiri*), 77, 141
 Sex, Japanese attitude to — instinct, 164
 SHIMABARA revolt, the, 86
Shimbetsu, the, the class immediately below the members of the Imperial family, 7
 SHIMONOSEKI, bombardment of, 94
Shingon Buddhism, 51
 SHINRAN, the successor of Honen in Jodo Pietism, 51
 SHINTO, fundamental beliefs of, 16; in the home, 10 *seq.*; in the community, 25 *seq.*; no priestly hierarchy in, 28; State — no religion, 43; in the State, 35 *seq.*
Shogun, 40, 54; Tokugawa Ieyasu as, 70
Shokumin, the class of artisans and craftsmen, 73
 SHOTOKU Prince, the Regent, 101

SHOWA Restoration, the, 183
Shugo or discipline, generally self-imposed, 179
Shushin, or "morals", 109
 Sincerity according to the Japanese, 152, 157 *seq.*
 Sleep, deprivation of, as discipline, 163
 Society, structure of Japanese, 72
Son-ō Jō-i, slogan for expelling the barbarians, 94
Son-ō Tō-baku, slogan for abolition of Shogunate, 95
 "Sovereign, heavenly", origin of, 4
 Suicide, 8; frequency and reasons for, 143
 Sumptuary legislation, 75; value of, 78
 Sun goddess, the, 6, 13
 "Sword Hunt", the, of Hideyoshi, 69
 Swordsmiths, excellence of Japanese, 73

T

Tablets of the dead, 19
 TAIKWA Reform, the, 36, 57
 TAIRA clan, the, 54, 60, 102
 TAKASUGI Shinsako, 97
 Taxation, proportion of, under Hideyoshi, 69
 Tea ceremony, the, 177
Terakoya, or Temple schools, 55
 "Thought, dangerous", 110
 TOKUGAWA Ieyasu, founder of the Shogunate, 64; the — Shogunate,

40, 68 *seq.*; sumptuary legislation of, 75
 TOYOTOMI Hideyoshi, 64 *seq.*
 Trade monopoly held by Portuguese, 82

U

U.S.A. and Japan, relation between, 197
Uji, the, origin of, and development, 12 *seq.*
Ujigami, the, 12, 36; as the "parish church", 26
Ujiko, the parishioners, 26
 URAKAMI, the Christian village of, 90

V

"Virtues of the Emperor", the, 191

W

Warrior class, the, 60
 Women, education of, 107; —'s Society for National Defence, 112; Japanese — at home, 178; elected to Diet, 204

Z

Zaibatsu, the, 124, 160
Zen sect of Buddhism, the, 54, 75, 122, 174

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